









Thomas F. Torrance

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With the Author's kind regards,

University of Edinburgh  
15<sup>th</sup> May 1868.

THE  
FATHERHOOD OF GOD

SCS #1482



THE  
FATHERHOOD OF GOD

CONSIDERED IN ITS GENERAL AND SPECIAL ASPECTS  
AND PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO

THE ATONEMENT

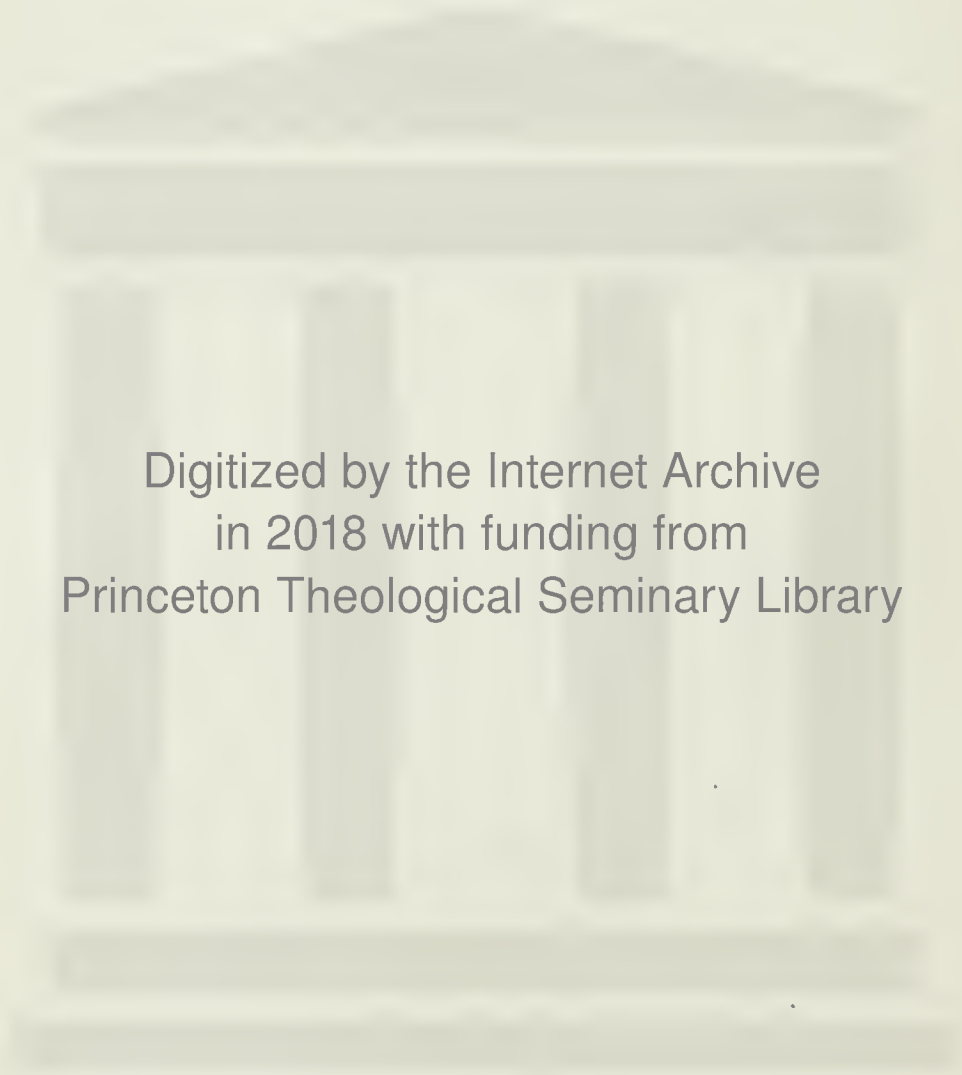
WITH A  
REVIEW OF RECENT SPECULATIONS ON THE SUBJECT, AND A  
REPLY TO THE STRICTURES OF DR CANDLISH

BY  
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THIRD EDITION

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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THE following Lectures were originally prepared as part of a course of instruction in Systematic Theology, during the past Session in the University of Edinburgh: and they are now published, with some additions and amendments, in the hope that they may contribute to the exposition of a subject of deep interest, not only to theological students, but to all Christians.

My aim has been to illustrate the Divine Fatherhood, at once in its general reference to all mankind, and in its special reference to those who are the “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;” to show that these several aspects of the doctrine may, on reasonable and scriptural grounds, be sufficiently vindicated and established; to explain wherein they differ, and how they may be harmonised; and to point out the relation which they bear to some other highly important articles of the Christian system—above all, to the fundamental doctrine of the Atonement.

I dare not flatter myself that this object has been fully accomplished. But however far I may have come short of it, my labour will not be lost if it in-

duce others to turn their attention to a subject which has not hitherto received that careful and thorough discussion to which it is entitled.

I have been constrained in prosecuting this inquiry to controvert the views of some modern writers respecting the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, as well as with reference to the efficacy of baptism ; and on other points I have been brought into direct collision with the novel opinions set forth by Dr Candlish in his recently published ‘Cunningham Lectures on the Fatherhood of God.’

I trust, however, that while firmly maintaining my own principles, I shall not be found to have spoken of those who differ from me in terms that are either uncharitable or disrespectful.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
1st May 1866.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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IN issuing a Second Edition of this volume, I have endeavoured, by a careful and thorough revision, and by some additional arguments and illustrations, to render it more worthy of that favourable reception—so far exceeding my expectations—which it has already met with.

In compliance with many suggestions which have been made to me, I have greatly enlarged that portion of the work which has reference to the doctrine of the Atonement. And I trust that by so doing I have furnished additional proof that the “Common Fatherhood of God,” instead of being adverse, is, on the contrary, eminently conducive to sound scriptural views of this essential article of Christian faith,—and that, next to the plain and authoritative statements of the Word of God, there is no other test that can be more effectively applied to any proposed theory respecting our Lord’s sufferings than the simple consideration,—*How far it represents them as a manifestation, altogether unparalleled, of the fatherly love of God towards all mankind?*

I have thought it necessary to append to this Edition a reply to the full review of my argument, with which I have been honoured by Dr Candlish, in an Essay prefixed to the Third Edition of his ‘Cunning

ham Lectures.' I venture to express a hope that nothing in my reply will, to adopt his own words, "be found more likely to interrupt friendly relations between us than his own free strictures on my statements and opinions." And at the same time I heartily thank him for his highly gratifying commendation of those parts of my work in which he concurs.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
*23d January 1867.*

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

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IN publishing a Third Edition of these Lectures, the only considerable additions I have made to them are a few pages in Lecture Fourth, referring to Mr Campbell's vindication of his theory of the Atonement in the recently published Second Edition of his Treatise, and two Notes, C and K, the former consisting of a brief notice of Mr Wright's work on 'The Divine Fatherhood,' and the latter containing a few remarks on the sufficiency of the Atonement.

I have again to express my thankfulness for the favourable manner in which these Lectures have been received, and the gratifying success with which their publication has been attended.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
*22d April 1868.*



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ERRATUM.

In page 135, line 15, insert "*the*" before "*limited*."



# THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

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## LECTURE I.

### THE COMMON FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

THE Fatherhood of God, whether in relation to all men as His intelligent and moral creatures, or more particularly in relation to those who are “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” has hitherto been in a remarkable degree exempted from the speculations and controversies of theology. No heresies of any note have ever arisen with respect to it. No schisms or bitter contentions have been occasioned by it. A comparatively small space has ordinarily been allotted to it in our articles of faith and systems of divinity. And for the most part it seems to have been regarded as a subject better fitted for popular impression and appeal, than for scientific investigation and discussion.

In regard to the more general aspect of this doctrine, the prevalent opinion of the Christian Church has ever been, that all mankind may be held to be the children of God—as deriving their existence from Him—as created after His likeness—as still retaining some traces of His image, though grievously defaced and distorted by the Fall—and as largely partaking of His providential care and bounty. I am not

aware, indeed, that this general Fatherhood of God has ever hitherto been formally controverted. Sometimes it has been unduly magnified, so as to supersede or cast into the shade those other relations of sovereign Ruler and righteous Law-giver which are equally and no less essentially sustained by Him. But even by those who have most loudly protested against any such inordinate exaltation of it, the paternity of God, as one of the manifold relations which He bears towards all His intelligent and moral creatures, has, so far as I know, been freely and fully admitted.

With respect, again, to the special aspect of this doctrine, there has been the like substantial agreement among all Christians, in holding that such as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are children of God in a higher sense than other men. And though there cannot be said to be an entire harmony of sentiment regarding the characteristic specialties of this higher sonship,—some apparently holding it to be a mere restoration of the primal closeness and fulness of that relation which subsisted between God and man prior to the Fall, while others speak of it as to a great extent a new relation, resting on grounds peculiar to itself,—yet is there little diversity of opinion to be noted with reference either to the parties to whom it belongs—those who are justified by faith in the Redeemer—or to the inestimable blessings which result from it,—freedom of access to God, intimacy of fellowship with Him, a filial spirit of confidence and affection towards Him, a sure interest in His parental care and fatherly discipline, and a well-grounded hope of inheriting His heavenly promises.

A new theory, however, has recently been promulgated by a very distinguished writer upon this subject, in which the opinions that have hitherto prevailed respecting the divine Fatherhood in either of its aspects are to a great extent broadly controverted.

The substance of the theory to which I refer is briefly this: *that the relation which God sustains to His eternal Son is His only true and proper Fatherhood, and that it is only by their partaking of that relation that angels and men become the sons*

*of God.* Or, the theory may be resolved into these two propositions,—*First*, that God is not, and never has been, a Father, in any true sense of the expression, to any of His creatures, except to those only who are His children by faith in Jesus Christ; and, *secondly*, that the sonship which God confers on believers is substantially the same relation which subsists between the first and the second person of the Godhead.

These principles are certainly of a very novel and startling kind, being not a little opposed to those things which have hitherto been commonly received among us. They are unfolded, however, in a highly interesting and effective manner, and are vindicated with a remarkable degree of subtlety and ingenuity. And they are certainly well entitled to our serious attention, whether we consider the importance of the subject to which they relate, or the influential position and well-merited reputation of the author by whom they have been deliberately propounded. I may add that, whatever opinion may be formed as to the soundness of them, they are calculated to do good service to the cause of truth, by turning the attention of theologians to a subject which, it must be confessed, has not as yet been adequately discussed. And I shall gladly avail myself of the opportunity they afford me of placing before you some views of this interesting subject, which certainly would not have otherwise occurred to me.

In entering on this discussion, I need scarcely observe that we necessarily assume the *personality of God*, as a living, self-conscious, intelligent, and voluntary Agent, distinct from ourselves and from all His other creatures. For it must be evident that a mere metaphysical abstraction, or indeterminate *something*, bearing the name of God, but with no more distinctive character assigned to it than the “absolute existence,”—“the totality of being,”—“the sum of the activities which constitute the universe,”—cannot be conceived as standing in the paternal relation either towards all or towards any of the human family. Such a relation can be sustained only by one who is a living and thinking agent like ourselves.

But this is not all. In affirming the divine Fatherhood we assume not only that God is a living person, but that, as such, *He bears a true affinity to us*, so that we may ascribe to Him, in an infinitely perfect degree, whatever intellectual and moral qualities are essential to the purity, dignity, and excellence of our own nature.

It would, I admit, be a grievous error to think that "He is altogether such a one as ourselves." We cannot, for example, conceive of Him as really possessing a material form and organism similar to the human body, although, in highly figurative language, such things may be occasionally ascribed to Him. For God is a pure Spirit, invisible and incorporeal, such as "no eye hath seen, or can see." But this does not hinder our attributing to Him, as a Spirit, the actual possession of such mental and moral qualities as are implied in the only conceptions of a spirit which we are able to form. There is nothing that savours of idolatry in doing so. For as Storr has well observed, "*This image of God is not one which we make, but which God himself proposes to us.*"\* And it is a no less instructive remark of Mansel,† that "the very commandment which forbids the representation of God by a bodily likeness, does so by means of two other human representations, that of a mental state and that of a consequent course of action; 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image; for I, the Lord thy God, am a *jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.*'" If, therefore, there be a false and unwarranted anthropomorphism, there is also an anthropomorphism which is legitimate and true. The fact of our having been "created after the image of God," implies the existence in Him of somewhat that is akin to the normal and original constitution of human nature. And while the spirituality of God necessarily excludes from this affinity any such thing as a conformity to us in bodily organism, it no less evidently includes in it a resemblance to us in those intellectual and moral attributes of sinless humanity, apart from

\* 'Annotations quædam Theologicæ,' p. 10.

† 'Bampton Lectures,' p. 286.



which the word "spirit," as applied to Him, is a mere empty sound, conveying no intelligible meaning.

It must also be remembered, that in God there is no affinity to the manifold sins and imperfections of our fallen state. It would be the height of impiety to suppose that these, or anything akin to them, are attributable to Him. And hence it is but a faint and distant and inadequate resemblance of the character of God which the qualities of the human soul, as actually existing, can be held to indicate. In many respects assuredly "His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts."

Fallen though we be, however, there are still some traces of our primal conformity to the divine image to be found in us. There are high intellectual faculties, for example, which are capable of very wonderful attainments in the varied departments of science and of art, and from which somewhat of a conception may be formed of the infinite wisdom and knowledge of Him who has endowed us with them. There are warm sympathies, too, and strong impulses of natural affection, which greatly contribute to the happiness of social life, and by which we are taught that if men, being evil, are thus prompted to do good to those who are dependent on them, much more may the like goodness be expected from our Father in heaven, by whom these kindly principles have been implanted in us. Above all, there is a conscience within our breasts by which we are enabled to discern between good and evil. And in so far as due heed is given to this divine monitor, we may know from its dictates how greatly we have degenerated from the primitive excellence and rectitude of our moral nature, and may thus in some measure reproduce in our conceptions the ideal of humanity as it came from the Creator's hands, so as to learn wherein the true likeness of God consists, not from what we now are, but from *what we originally were, and from what we know and feel that we still ought to be.*

It is true that in thus seeking to ascertain the nature of God from the traces of His image as discernible in the nature of man, we stand much in need of some higher teaching to

save us from the darkening and misleading influence of our own depravity. And when we consider how greatly the heathen erred in bringing down their gods to their own level, and worshipping deities that were often no better than impersonations of their grossest vices and most hateful passions, we cannot be too thankful that our God has given us a thoroughly trustworthy exposition of His character in the clear and authoritative declarations of His Word.

It is remarkable, however, that the revelation He has thus made to us is still, if we may so express it, cast into a human mould. We are taught in Scripture to ascribe to the divine nature whatever we are able to conceive of as holy, upright, and benignant in the human nature. And the kindly affections and sympathies of our own hearts are there very frequently employed to represent the thoughts and dispositions which the great God entertains towards us. Thus we are told to judge of His tender pity by that of an earthly parent for his children,—of His readiness to grant such good things as we may ask of Him, by the like readiness of even sinful men to hear the cry of their offspring for necessary food,—of His true kindness in sending afflictions to His people, by the salutary discipline of the “fathers of our flesh,” who chasten us for our correction and improvement,—of His mercy to the penitent, by the cordial reception which a much-aggrieved but loving father gives to his returning prodigal,—of the unfailing constancy and tenderness of His love, by the strong instinct of maternal affection which will not allow a woman to forget her sucking child, and to withhold compassion from the son of her womb. And in that most precious manifestation of the divine attributes which is given us in the person of God’s incarnate Son, we are privileged to behold divinity through the medium of humanity, and to learn what manner of Being the Invisible Father is, from the character and life of One who “is not ashamed to call us brethren.” For in this perfect Man the divine image is set before us with no spots or flaws to dim its brightness or to mar its symmetry; inasmuch that He could truly reply to His apostle’s words, “Show us the

Father, and it sufficeth us," by saying, "Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father!"

We may be told, indeed, that there is no actual reality in such representations of God after the manner of man; that they are mere accommodations of divine things to our limited capacity; that the knowledge they impart is "only regulative or practical, and not in any proper sense speculative or scientific;" that they "teach us, not what God truly is, but only how He wills that we should think of Him."\*

If by this statement it be only meant that we cannot by such representations acquire a *full and adequate* knowledge of the divine character, we can have no hesitation in assenting to it. For it is unquestionable that our limited faculties are incapable of *anyhow* knowing God unto perfection.

But if the meaning be that knowledge obtained in the manner referred to *is not true and trustworthy knowledge as far as it goes*, we must utterly dissent from any such allegation. For certainly it is not for a moment to be supposed that "God wills us to think of Him" *otherwise* than "what He truly is." And as little is it to be supposed that any knowledge of the divine character will continue to be "regulative" of the practice of a reasonable man, if he doubts or denies its coincidence with the very truth.†

Moreover, what are we to make of the revelation which God has been pleased in human language to convey to us, if such terms as "justice," "holiness," "love," "pity," "mercy," when applied to the Almighty, are not to be understood as indicating qualities exactly the same in kind, though not in degree, with those which in men are denoted by these expressions? In that case it is evident that a revelation, so communicated, would either be utterly unintelligible, or grossly delusive.

As for the assertion, again, that human images or analogies, when used to express or illustrate the character of God, are

\* See Mansel's 'Bampton Lectures,' Lecture V.

† See Note A.



mere accommodations of divine things to our limited capacities, without any basis of reality to rest upon ;—a simple and satisfactory answer may be found to it, in the fact of that affinity of man to God, which originally subsisted, and which it is one great purpose of the Gospel to restore. For if man, in his normal state, was made after the likeness of God, we are fully warranted, in that case, to conceive of God in forms of thought derived from the primitive or perfect man. All that is necessary is, that we abstract or eliminate from our now degenerate nature those sins and blemishes with which it is disfigured, in order to discern in it a true, though doubtless a humble and inadequate, counterpart of the nature of God. And if, by the exercise of reason and the monitions of conscience, aided by the instructions of Holy Scripture, and, above all, by the glorious manifestation of perfect humanity in the character of Jesus Christ, we are able to arrive at anything like a just conception of *what man was* in the state in which he was created, we are fully entitled to infer from this conception *what God is*, who was man's original archetype.

Now, if there be any force in these considerations, as showing that the great God bears a true affinity to us, they furnish a sufficient basis for concluding, that He actually possesses those qualities essential to the perfection of human nature, which reason and revelation alike teach us to ascribe to Him ; and a no less sufficient warrant for believing that He really and truly sustains towards us such relations, analogous to those which subsist between man and man, as the actual course of His dealings with us may be found to indicate, or the positive declarations of His inspired Word may be found to reveal.

The question then comes to be, *Is Fatherhood thus attributable to Him ?* Have we satisfactory grounds, from reason and from revelation, for ascribing to God the characteristics of a father, and for holding that He sustains the relation of a father, either towards all, or towards any of the human race ?



In taking up this question, first of all, *in its general reference*, with the view of showing the justice of that affirmative answer which has commonly been given to it, we are brought into direct collision with the sentiments of a distinguished author, already referred to, who has recently striven to prove by an elaborate argument "that there does not subsist between God and all mankind any true or proper relation of fatherhood and sonship, but that the existence of such a relation is restricted to those who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

It seems to me, therefore, that the most convenient method in which we can vindicate the general doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood, is by reviewing the grounds on which this writer has endeavoured to subvert it. And in doing so, it is proper to begin with those general arguments on the principles of natural religion, by which his novel and peculiar position has been advocated.

It is much to be regretted that, at the outset of his argument, no definition or description of fatherhood should have been given. The reason assigned for this omission is, that "the duty of defining or describing the relation in question is incumbent on those who assert it as a natural relation, and not on him who denies it;" and that, "for the most part, the assertors of it decline the task, and are more inclined to deal in vague generalities." \*

I cannot admit that this is a sufficient reason. Those who have hitherto affirmed the divine paternity as a natural relation, have never till now had any opponent to contend against. Accordingly, they did not see the necessity of giving any precise or logical definition. They thought that the simple application to God of the word "Father" would be sufficiently understood, as ascribing to Him a relation to His intelligent creatures somewhat analogous to that which subsists between an earthly parent and his children. Had any one disputed their doctrine, and asked them to define "fatherhood," they might probably have said that "*fatherhood implies the origination by one*

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 9.

*intelligent person of another intelligent person like in nature to himself, and the continued support, protection, and nourishment of the person thus originated by him to whom he owes his being.*" And I need scarcely say that the word, as thus defined, is certainly applicable to God, with reference to all mankind. So long, however, as there was no contention about the matter, we have little cause for wonder that a definition should have been withheld. The case is altogether different *now*, when for the first time the reality of the Divine Fatherhood, as a relation naturally subsisting between God and man, is controverted. And I cannot help thinking that the denier of that relation was called upon to define or describe the thing that is denied by him. At all events, he is scarcely entitled to reproach his opponents for being "more inclined to deal in vague generalities than in accurate definitions," when he is himself claiming a right to follow the same course.

In the absence, however, of any definition of "fatherhood," let us mark his statement of the precise nature of the point at issue.

"It is not a question," he says,\* "about the existence of a certain attribute in God, such as goodness, kindness, pity, sympathy. Nor is it a question about the sentiments and feelings which God may be supposed to entertain towards the beings whom He has made, and which He may express or embody in His actual dealings with them. It is about the existence of a certain positively real and actual relation of fatherhood and sonship between the Creator and His intelligent creatures; such a relation as, like all real and actual relations, implies this at least, that in virtue of it, certain specific reciprocal obligations, of a peculiar nature, are incumbent on the parties embraced in it, having certain specific reciprocal rights, privileges, and endearments associated with them. It is not a divine feeling that may be called fatherly,—as it might be equally well named from some other kindly human analogy,—that we are in search of; but a real and actual fatherhood. We want not merely one who, in his other relations, acts as far as possible a fatherly part towards us, but one who is in fact our father."

Now, as to this mode of stating the precise point at issue, we can only assent to it with one or two qualifications. For

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 23.

example, when the question is said to be “about the existence of a certain positively real and actual relation of fatherhood and sonship between the Creator and His intelligent creatures,” it must be remembered that, in speaking of the great God as sustaining certain relations to mankind, we are obliged to have recourse to the analogy of human relations; but that, in doing so, we are not to be held as affirming that the former relations are *strictly identical* with the latter, or in all respects their *exact and perfect counterpart*. When we maintain, therefore, that God is in some sense truly and properly the Father of all His intelligent creatures, we are not bound to show that the relation which He bears to them is literally and exactly a relation of paternity, strictly the same with that of an earthly parent to his offspring, but only that it is a *really subsisting relation*, of which that of paternity is the most appropriate type.

Again, when it is said that God’s fatherhood, if real, “implies, like all real and actual relations, that in virtue of it, certain specific *reciprocal obligations* are incumbent on the parties embraced in it,” there would seem to be in this statement an utter exclusion of the possibility, not only of the paternal relation, but of any relation whatsoever between God and man. For, strictly speaking, the supreme Jehovah cannot be held to lie under any obligations to His creatures. At the same time, although men have no inherent claim upon Him, and dare not presume to think that He is indebted to them, they are warranted to say that *He owes it to Himself* to act towards them in such a manner as becomes Him,—justly, faithfully, consistently, beneficently,—so as to accord with the perfections of His own nature, as well as with the character and position He has assigned to them. In a spirit of the truest reverence may they expect Him thus to deal with them. Nay, they would not be honouring Him as they ought, did they think Him capable of acting towards them otherwise. Such being the case, we may hold that, on the part of God, with reference to those whom He acknowledges as His children, as well as on their part with reference to God, there is an



analogy to the "reciprocal obligations implied in all real and actual relations," sufficient to furnish a substantial basis for our present argument. Otherwise, indeed, it is not only the fatherhood of God that must be held to have no real subsistence, but along with it every other relation in which He may be regarded as standing to His intelligent creatures.

Some farther exception may be taken to the statement, that "we want not merely one who, in his other relations, *acts as far as possible a fatherly part towards us*, but one who is in fact our father." For I see not how the relations which God sustains towards us can, on the principles of natural religion, be ascertained, otherwise than *by observing the manner in which He acts towards us*. And if, therefore, we find, as the result of such observation, that "He acts towards us, as far as possible, a fatherly part," we have herein as full a warrant as can be reasonably required for saying that, whatever other relations He may sustain, He certainly does sustain the relation of paternity, or some relation of which paternity is our fittest emblem. We are just as much entitled to infer the existence of such a relation from the evidences of fatherly kindness observable in His dealings with us, as to infer His *magisterial* relation towards us from the like evidences of His sovereign rule and moral government.

Premising these remarks as to the state of the question before us, we are now prepared to consider the reasonable grounds on which it is argued, that the essential relation which God sustains towards His intelligent creatures is that, not of a father, but exclusively of a governor.

"Whatever the Creator makes," we are told, "He must rule. If it is not to rule Him, He must rule it. And the rule must always be, in a sense more or less proper, by law and judgment; the nature of the law and judgment corresponding with the nature and constitution of the thing or being to be ruled.

"If it be inert matter that is to be ruled, the law will be of a material or physical kind, whether mechanical or chemical."—"If what is to be ruled be possessed of animal life, with the sensational properties which we class as instinctive; the sort of law by which



such beings are ruled is the law of instinct, and in a measure of experience, adapted to their sentient and motive nature.”—“But if the creatures to be ruled be possessed of intelligence and of conscience, the rule of their Creator becomes government properly so called,—a rational and moral government, by means of a law and a judgment, of which reason and the moral sense take cognisance.”

“Thus it would seem that, from the very nature of the case, creation implies rule and government. The Creator must, of very necessity, be a ruler and governor, unless His own creation is to be independent of Himself. And as regards His intelligent creatures, His rule and government must be, in the proper forensic sense, legal and judicial, if it is to be adapted to the constitution and relative position of the persons who are to be governed.”

“Where, then,” it is asked, “is the idea of fatherhood? Is there, so far as the inquiry has hitherto been prosecuted, any room for it at all? Is it not rather excluded? Let it be taken for granted, that the Creator is a living personal intelligence, distinct from His own creation; and, in particular, distinct from His own intelligent creatures, who are themselves, as He is, living personal intelligences. It may be clearly shown, and certainly inferred, that He must, as Creator, govern them, and govern them in a manner suited to their organisation and constitution, as that of beings capable of owning righteous authority and reasonable law, and therefore capable of receiving recompense or retribution. Standing to them in the relation of their Creator, He must of necessity stand to them in the relation of their Ruler, their sovereign Lawgiver, and just Judge. These apprehensions of God, and of His relation to the rational and responsible inhabitants of His universe, are of the essence of all belief in Him, and all worship of Him. They originate, and, what is more, they fully explain and vindicate, both belief and worship. But the paternal relation, the fatherhood of God, has no place among them.” \*

Again, it is argued, “If any choose to say, that fatherhood is simply origination, then, of course, creation and paternity are identical. But, not to speak of the obvious difficulty that this establishes somewhat too wide a fatherhood, who does not see that it really evacuates the idea of fatherhood of any precise or definite meaning; making the name little more than a euphonious synonym, or figurative personification for causation; and, in truth, denying that there is any real paternal relation on the part of God at all?”

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 17-22.

“Nor will it avail to hold, by way of limitation and definition, that it is His ‘creating them in His own image after His own likeness’ that constitutes the Creator to be also the Father of the higher intelligences ; as if His fatherhood consisted in His being the cause of new beings like Himself coming into existence. For this only brings us back to the former inquiry, What is it, as regards the relation between God and them, that their being thus created in His image necessarily involves ? It can scarcely be proved to involve any more than this, that they are capable of understanding His will, feeling their free responsibility under it, and receiving reward or punishment in terms of it. His government of them, therefore, must be of a reasonable and moral character, by means of a reasonable moral law, having annexed to it suitable and corresponding judicial awards. If the relation of fatherhood arises out of the fact of creation, it may be admitted that, in the case of intelligent creatures, it involves that. But it cannot be shown to involve more than that ; and really, if that is all, the fatherhood of God is but a name. For it cannot be too strongly asserted, that among the primary and original elements of our relational conception of God, there is absolutely no trace of anything peculiar in the constitution and condition of His rational, as distinct from His other creatures, beyond the bare fact of intelligent responsibility.” \*

Such is the argument. And I am perfectly ready to admit that the divine fatherhood “has no place” among the conclusions to which it leads ; and for this very sufficient reason, that the argument is so constructed as carefully to exclude every element, divine or human, which could possibly have led to the conclusion which it seeks to avoid. It does not thence follow, however, that other lines of argument of a somewhat similar kind might not be pursued, by which the paternity of God might be established. Nor is it any disparagement of this great truth, if capable of proof on its own proper grounds, that it should not be deducible from precisely the same *data* as another truth, equally interesting and important.

It will be observed, that the argument above stated is not founded exclusively on the bare fact of *creation*. Mere crea-

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 24-26.

tion, indeed, though clearly enough evincing *the right* which God has to rule the things which He has made, cannot establish *the fact* that He does rule them, still less can it indicate the method of His rule.

It is assumed, however, that God must in this respect be held as maintaining and exercising His rights ; and farther, that in doing so He must be considered as ruling the various orders of His creatures in such several ways as are answerable to their natures—inert matter by physical laws—irrational animals by their instincts—and intelligent creatures by a rational and moral government, administered by means of a law and judgment, of which reason and the moral sense take cognisance. It is yet farther assumed, that among the primary elements of our relational conception of God, there is absolutely no trace of anything peculiar in the constitution and condition of His rational, as distinct from His other creatures, beyond the bare fact of intelligent responsibility. And proceeding in this way, it is not greatly to be wondered at that, in the easiest and smoothest manner that could possibly be wished, the conclusion should be reached, that “God, as the creator of intelligent and accountable beings, must of necessity stand to them in the relation of their sovereign law-giver and just judge, but nothing more.”

If, in our turn, however, we be allowed to make a few assumptions,—no less consistent with the nature of God and the condition of man than those which are made in the argument above referred to,—we may, I think, with equal ease and equal justice, come to a somewhat different conclusion—namely, that God, as the creator of all men, may be held as standing to them in the relation of a father, as well as of a sovereign.

Be it assumed, then, that “God is love,” and that His being so, as the author referred to has himself stated, “springs out of the very necessity of His nature.”\* Be it farther assumed that, in the exercise of that love, which is thus allowed to be “essential to his manner of being,” He has brought into exist-

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 67.



ence a race of intelligent and moral creatures, "created in His own image and after His own likeness," with reference to whom He must equally have been disposed to manifest His love, and to maintain His rightful authority. And yet farther, be it assumed that these rational and moral creatures, as bearing the image of Him by whom they were made, *have something more* to distinguish them from His other creatures "*beyond the bare fact of intelligent responsibility*,"—that they have the capacity of knowing, loving, desiring, trusting, serving, and enjoying Him; and that the very sum of all the duties which they owe to Him is nothing else than *love*, as the natural and fit response to that love wherewith their Creator hath first loved them.

It may be that in this last supposition there are some things that will not be readily, if at all, conceded. But why not? There is surely nothing unreasonable in it. The "image or likeness of God" cannot surely be held to consist in anything *so barely intellectual or so coldly judicial* as a mere "capacity of understanding the divine will, and feeling a sense of responsibility under it." If this were all that is implied in bearing the divine image, what then are we to think of God himself, whose image it is? In that case, we must evidently divest the character of God of some of the most essential and most adorable of its attributes. One thing we certainly know, that the *restored image* of God in the souls of men when regenerated by the Holy Spirit, includes in it, not only "intelligent responsibility," but such a conformity to God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness as prompts them to love Him, and cleave to Him with all their heart. And if so, we cannot think that it was otherwise with the primal image of God, as impressed on our progenitors. Undoubtedly, to love God, to trust in Him, to seek after Him, to rejoice in His favour, to delight in His fellowship, to submit to His appointments, and cheerfully to obey His will, was part of the original constitution of the human soul before sin had ruined and depraved it.

And what then? May we not reasonably conclude that



God, having brought such creatures into being, "will not forsake the work of His own hands"? Having so far acted towards them as a father in giving them existence and imparting to them His own likeness, we cannot suppose that He will thereafter leave them orphans. The same love which originally moved Him to the creation of them, will move Him still to watch over them with parental care, and to provide for them with parental kindness and liberality. And even when, like prodigal sons, they have departed from Him, and forfeited by their sins all title to His favour, and striven, as far as they could, to dis sever, or at least to disown, the bonds of their relation to Him, it is no incredible thing that His fatherly love may still yearn after them, and may devise means whereby, without prejudice to the authority of His laws and the majesty of His government, His banished ones may, if penitent, be restored to the comforts of His home and the endearments of His fellowship.

I confess, however, that I have little confidence in such reasonings, whether as regards the divine sovereignty or the divine fatherhood. It seems to me to be a much safer and more becoming course to observe the manner in which God actually deals with us, and thence to infer the relations which He bears to us, than to attempt by any speculative arguments to determine that such and such relations must necessarily be sustained, and that such and such procedure must necessarily be observed by Him. And if this cautious inductive process be pursued, I am confident that it will fairly lead to the conclusion, that God is at once the Ruler and the Father of His intelligent creatures. For while, notwithstanding many exceptional and anomalous instances, there are, upon the whole, clear traces of a moral government to be discerned in the ordinary course of divine providence, it is no less indisputable that, in God's dealings with the human family, we find, amidst much that is painful and afflictive, an evident excess and exuberance of divine bounty—a constant and overflowing fulness of beneficence—far beyond aught that mere equity or justice on the part of a sovereign ruler could have dictated—

and such as can only be satisfactorily accounted for by ascribing it to the care and kindness of our Father in heaven.

If, again, we turn to the constitution of our nature for evidences of the relation in which we stand to Him who made us, a like conclusion seems to be unavoidable. For while in that consciousness of moral obligation, of which even the worst sinners cannot wholly divest themselves, we see indications, though perhaps dim and ill defined, of subjection to the law and judgment of the Supreme Governor, there are instincts and appetencies of a religious tendency to be found in us, which seem to betoken, no less significantly, our affinity to Him who is the Father of our spirits. How else are we to interpret that sense of dependence on some superior power which mankind have ever exhibited, and that disposition, though often fitful and misguided, to “seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him,” which, even in their utmost estrangement from Him, they have evinced, than as inarticulate utterances of the same desire which the apostle cherished when he said to Jesus, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” expressing their felt need of His guidance and defence, and acknowledging their felt incapacity, when severed from Him, to rise to the true dignity and happiness of their being? And if such indications of a filial relation to God,—or, if you will, of somewhat that approximates to it,—are still to be traced amidst the ruins of our fallen state, how much more distinct and evident must they have been before sin had disfigured and obscured them!

Hence, though the full recognition of the divine paternity be in a great measure peculiar to revealed religion, yet, as is well remarked by Bishop Pearson,\* “Wherever God hath been acknowledged, He hath been understood and worshipped as a father; the very heathen poets so describe their gods; and their vulgar names did carry *Father* in them, as the most popular and universal notion.” Plato, Plutarch, and other heathen sages, speak of the Deity as “Father and Maker of all.” Homer’s favourite designation of Jupiter is “Father of

\* Pearson on the Creed, Art. I.

gods and men." Horace represents him as "the Father and Guardian of mankind." And Paul, in his address to the Athenians, refers to two Grecian poets, Aratus and Cleanthes, as having said that "we are the offspring of God."

Nor let it be thought, that by ascribing to Almighty God the parental character with reference to His intelligent creatures, we necessarily detract from the height of His supremacy, or from the rectitude and authority of His government as their sovereign. If He were altogether such a one as ourselves, beset with manifold frailties and imperfections, it could scarcely be otherwise than that the two relations should frequently clash and conflict with one another. But when we remember that He is God, and not man, and that, as such, He is possessed of all possible excellencies, and absolutely exempt from error or infirmity, we may be assured that all His attributes will be fully exercised, and all His relations perfectly sustained, without the least risk of confusion or antagonism; and that He will be not the less loving as a father for all the supremacy and majesty of His dominion, nor the less upright and authoritative as a sovereign for all the beneficence and tenderness of His parental care.

But here we are met with the objection, that the two relations, when conceived to subsist on the basis of creation, *are absolutely incompatible with one another.*

"The notion," we are told, "of the Creator's government of the very highest of His intelligent creatures being anything else, in its principle and ideal, than simply and strictly legal and judicial, is, as it respects the radical and essential relation of Creator and creature, an inconsistency; an intolerable anomaly; a suicidal self-contradiction. Were it admitted, it must break down—so far as it is admitted, it does tend to break down—the vast, infinite distance that should ever be felt to subsist between the Creator and the creature."—"It introduces necessarily the idea of some sort of intermediate relative position, modifying and qualifying the Creator's sovereignty and the creature's subjection; as if the Creator owed something to the creature beyond strict legal justice, and as if the creature had some right or claim, irrespective of mere legal justice, which he might assert, if not against, yet at least upon, the Creator."—"Let



it be settled, then, as a fundamental truth, that on whatever other ground " (as, for example, of regenerating and adopting grace) " the relation of fatherhood in God may rest, and in whatever other sphere of divine operation or creature experience it may unfold itself, it cannot have its rise in creation, and cannot have its place in that rule or government which is consequent upon creation."\*

I confess my inability to see the force of this argument. The circumstance that God is our Father, as having created us, does not imply that we have any right or claim upon Him beyond strict justice. It may rather be considered as *investing Him* with an additional right or claim to our obedience. As for "the Creator *owing something beyond* strict justice to the creature," it is, in any view that may be taken of their mutual relations, a manifest impossibility. For it is a contradiction in terms to speak of one being as "owing more than strict justice" to another being. Whatever exceeds the claims of justice is evidently matter of grace and not of debt.

It is not seemly or reverend, indeed, to speak of creatures as having any claim on their Creator. Instead of saying that He owes it *to them*, we ought rather to say that He owes it *to Himself*,—that He owes it to the adorable attributes of His own character,—to deal with them according to those relations to Himself, whatever these may be, into which He has been pleased to bring them. If fatherhood be one of these relations, then, certainly, He owes it to Himself to act towards them a father's part. And they owe it to him, in a spirit of the fullest confidence, to look for a father's treatment at His hands. At the same time, it is to be carefully remembered, that the constitution of this, or of any other relation, between God and man, with all the privileges resulting from it, must ultimately be traced to His free and unmerited grace. Nor am I able to see any difference in this respect between fatherhood constituted on the footing of creation, and fatherhood constituted on any other basis; it must in any case be attributed to God alone. His creating us at all was an act of pure

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 26-28.



unmerited goodness. And His so creating us, "in His own image and after His own likeness," as to make us His intelligent offspring, and thereafter so sustaining and providing for us as to give us unceasing tokens of His fatherly care, is a still more striking manifestation of His grace. On whatever ground, therefore, His fatherhood may be supposed to rest, whether on the ground of original creation or of eventual adoption, there is no difference in so far as regards the undeserved graciousness with which it is conferred upon us. And hence there is no reason why it should, in this respect, be held to be incompatible with His sovereignty, when constituted on the one basis rather than on the other.

But where lies the incompatibility in either case? It is certain that among men the two relations are often combined. In the case of every royal family throughout the world, and of every judge or magistrate who is also a parent, they are united. And though, from the weakness and sinfulness of human nature, the one or the other of them may by such union be often impaired, it cannot be said that in their own nature they are incompatible. If those who are rulers and parents on the one hand, and those who are subjects and children on the other hand, were altogether such as they ought to be, we have no reason to think that there would be the slightest difficulty in harmonising the two relations in which they stand to one another.

But again, it is argued that the paternal relation implies some things that are inconsistent with the magisterial relation. "It implies the enjoyment by those towards whom it is sustained, of a permanent footing in the family, as opposed to one that is contingent or precarious; and in consequence of its implying this, it excludes the idea of punishment, properly so called, admitting only that of chastisement."\* This statement I shall have occasion fully to discuss, when we come to consider the privileges of the sons of adoption. But for the present it may suffice to state that "the enjoyment of a permanent footing in the family," which is here said to be

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 34.

implied in the relation of sonship, does not necessarily belong, and is not alleged to belong, to that relation as it exists on earth, being one of the peculiar attributes of the heavenly sonship which subsists between the first two persons of the Godhead. The author, against whose theory we are contending, has distinctly stated, towards the close of his volume,\* that "if we conceive of the relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and His children, according to the similitude of fatherhood and sonship among ourselves, we cannot see in it any element of absolute and inviolable security. A son's standing in his earthly parent's house is not absolutely and inviolably secure; he may go out, or he may be thrust out; his right to be at home with his father may be forfeited, or it may be despised and practically renounced; he may be tempted and may fall, and that, too, irrecoverably. If our standing as son's in the divine household is supposed to be simply like my son's standing in mine, it is not divested of the condition of precariousness."

This concession furnishes a sufficient reply to the objection before us. For we do not maintain that the relation which subsists between God's intelligent creatures and their Father in heaven, is identical with the relation which He bears to His Eternal Son. We simply affirm that it is analogous to that which subsists between an earthly parent and his children. And *this*, as is fully conceded, does not imply any such permanent position of the children in the family as should interfere with their subjection, if need should be, not only to parental chastisement, but to judicial condemnation. It is true, their sonship, as a relation, must still endure, but it may be a relation stripped of all its privileges; though continuing to be sons, they may be disowned and disinherited sons. Their Father-king, if He finds them to be incorrigible, may, in the exercise of His sovereignty, and without prejudice to His fatherhood, expel them from His household, deprive them of their birthright, and inflict upon them the just punishment of their evil deeds.

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 262.

There is no reason to think, then, that the fatherhood of God in any way conflicts with His judicial rectitude or supreme dominion. We must carefully eliminate from our views of His parental character the slightest trace of human error and infirmity. For it would be alike unreasonable to judge of Him as a father, from the weak indulgence of Eli or the doting partiality of David, as to form our estimate of Him as a king from the recklessness of Saul or the tyranny of Herod. We must also remember, when thinking of His fatherhood, that He stands in this relation, not only to a few favoured and isolated individuals, by whom His affections and sympathies are engrossed, and whose private interests He may be expected to pamper and indulge to the prejudice of their brethren, but to the whole family of mankind, whose general welfare in all things He is concerned to promote. We must form such conceptions of Him as the apostle did, when speaking of "the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work,"\* and then, I am very sure, we shall see nothing in His fatherhood that should hinder Him from inflicting on His rebellious offspring such penalties as He may, in His co-ordinate character of a judge or ruler, find to be necessary to maintain the honour and authority of His laws, and to further the peace and happiness of His universal kingdom.

These considerations appear to me sufficient to show that the parental character of God is by no means incompatible with His regal or judicial character. But whether or no we be able on these grounds, or on any other grounds that may be thought of, to prove that these two characters can be sustained by Him, without mutual conflict or collision, towards His rational creatures, *the fact* that He does sustain them appears to be, even on the principles of natural religion, beyond dispute. At all events, the indications of His fatherly care are no less clearly discernible, in the course of His ordinary dealings with us, than those of His moral government; and hence it seems impossible for us, with any consistency, to ignore the former, if we are willing to recognise the latter.

\* 1 Pet. i. 17.



In closing this branch of the argument, I may avail myself of the following concession, made at an after stage of his discussion, by the author whose views I have had occasion to controvert.

“Before the Son of God appeared in human nature,” he says, “the only conception which men could form of a relation of fatherhood and sonship between God and them, must have been based on the analogy of the paternal and filial relation among themselves; and there can be little doubt that the analogy is a natural, and, so far, a valid one. The relation of son and father on earth is fitted,—and probably in its original constitution intended,—to suggest the idea of a similar relation between earth and heaven: the creation or origination of intelligent beings, on the part of the great intelligent Creator, may thus be viewed as analogous to the act by which a human father produces a son like himself; and the Creator’s providence over His creatures may be likened to the human father’s care and tenderness towards his children. Such representations of God, accordingly, are not uncommon even among heathen writers, especially the poets; as might easily be shown by familiar quotations.” \*

This statement may almost be held to concede everything for which, in advocating the general paternity of God, we are concerned to plead; for it is unquestionable that the attributes and relations of God can be spoken of among mankind in no other than human language, and represented by no other than human similitudes and analogies. And if it can be said that “the relation of son and father on earth is *fitted*, and probably in its original constitution *intended*, to suggest the idea of a similar relation between earth and heaven,” and that “the analogy between the two relations is a natural, and so far a valid one,” I do not see what further reasonable grounds can be desiderated for holding God to be the Father of His intelligent creatures. Of this I am sure, that we have no other or better grounds for viewing Him as their ruler or lawgiver. For in ascribing to Him the one character, we are applying to Him what we conceive to be a “natural and valid human analogy,” quite as much as when we ascribe to Him the other.

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 113, 114.



There is a fine passage in Mansel's 'Bampton Lectures' which I cannot refrain from quoting with reference to this topic. Speaking of that "morbid horror of anthropomorphism which leads some modern philosophers to wish for a truer and juster idea of the Deity as He is, than that under which He has been pleased to reveal Himself," the lecturer observes:

"It is folly to dream that man, in forming a conception of the Divine character, can escape from himself, or that human reason can draw aught but a human portrait of God. These philosophers do but substitute a marred and mutilated humanity for one exalted and entire. They add nothing to their conception of God as He is, but only take away a part of their conception of man. Sympathy, and love, and fatherly kindness, and forgiving mercy, have evaporated in the crucible of their philosophy; and what is the *caput mortuum* that remains, but only the sterner features of humanity exhibited in repulsive nakedness? The God who listens to prayer, we are told, appears in the likeness of human mutability. Be it so. What is the God who does not listen but the likeness of human obstinacy? Do we ascribe to Him a fixed purpose? Our conception of a purpose is human. Do we speak of Him as continuing unchanged? Our conception of continuance is human. Do we conceive of Him as knowing and determining? What are knowledge and determination but modes of human consciousness? And what do we know of consciousness itself but as the contrast between successive mental states? But our rational philosopher stops short in the middle of his reasoning. He strips off from humanity just so much as suits his purpose, 'and the residue thereof he maketh a god'—less pious in his idolatry than the carver of the graven image, in that he does not fall down to it and worship it, but is content to stand afar off and reason concerning it. And why does he retain any conception of God at all, but that he retains some portion of an imperfect humanity? Man is still the residue that is left—deprived, indeed, of all that is amiable in humanity, but in the darker features which remain still man—man in his purposes, man in his inflexibility; pursuing with indomitable resolution a preconceived design, and deaf to the yearning instincts which compel His creatures to call upon Him. Yet this, forsooth, is a philosophical conception of the Deity more worthy of an enlightened reason than the human imagery of the Psalmist: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry'—'Like as a father pitieth His

children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' Surely downright idolatry is better than this *rational* worship of a fragment of humanity. Better is the superstition which sees the image of God in the wonderful whole which God has fashioned, than the philosophy which would carve for itself a deity out of the remnant which man has mutilated." \*

On the principles laid down in this very striking statement we hold ourselves warranted to apply to Almighty God the analogy of fatherhood with reference to His intelligent creatures, no less than that of judgeship or kingship, or any other human analogy by which He may be appropriately represented; inasmuch as the fatherly relation, as it subsists on earth, is allowed to be "fitted, and probably intended, to suggest the idea of a similar relation between earth and heaven." †

In my next Lecture I shall proceed to notice those indications of the general paternity of God which are given in His revealed Word.

\* Mansel, p. 18, 19.

† See Note B.

## LECTURE II.

### THE COMMON FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

*(Continued.)*

IN my last Lecture I endeavoured to state the reasonable grounds on which it may be held that God is the Father of all men as His intelligent creatures, and to show the insufficiency of those arguments by which this position has been recently controverted.

In farther prosecution of this subject, we must now pass from those fainter views of the character and relations of the Supreme Being which are indicated by the light of nature, to the fuller and clearer discoveries with regard to Him which may be expected in the revelations of His inspired Word.

In entering on this branch of the inquiry, it must be owned that the teachings of Holy Scripture regarding the fatherhood of God have reference chiefly to the special relation sustained by Him towards those who are of "the household of faith"—His children by regeneration and adoption. At the same time, there are not wanting indications, more or less significant, in the Word of God, of a general paternity, which may in some sense be ascribed to Him with reference to all men, as His rational and moral creatures.

1. Take as an example these words of Malachi, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"\* I quote this passage, not as containing a direct assertion of the

\* Mal. ii. 10.

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common fatherhood of God—for it may probably be viewed as specially referring to the Jewish nation—but as recognising and sanctioning a principle on which God's universal fatherhood may be established. There is an evident parallelism in these words of the prophet between the character of God as our Father and as our Creator—a parallelism which, if applied in the special case to the Israelites, is applicable also to all who are created after God's image. He is represented as sustaining towards us the parental relation, because He has created us. And this representation is fully justified by analogy. For just as among men this relation is constituted when a child instrumentally derives existence from his earthly parent, so may it be held that God, as the primary source of our being, is in the truest and highest sense our Father. The term as applied to Him is indeed figurative, but not the less on that account is it expressive of *a reality*. And of this reality it is a just and accurate expression—quite as much so as any other form of speech, whether literal or metaphorical, that we are able to find. For if it be at all allowable to speak of God in His relation to us under any similitudes drawn from our relations to one another, there is no such similitude that can more appropriately depict our original derivation from Him, as well as our continual dependence on Him, than that of fatherhood.

We are told, indeed, that to call God our Father, simply as being our Creator, “is to establish too wide a fatherhood”—that “it really evacuates the idea of fatherhood of any precise or definite meaning; making the name little more than a euphonious synonym, or figurative personification, for causation; and in truth denying that there is any real paternal relation on the part of God at all.” \*

I see no force or justice, however, in this objection. Of course, when the prophet says, “Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?” he is to be understood as speaking exclusively of those creatures who are denoted by the personal pronouns “*we*” and “*us*,” and as thus establish-

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 24, 25.



ing no wider fatherhood than such as will include himself and those other human beings who were capable of being influenced by his admonitions and remonstrances. Nor does he identify fatherhood with "causation" in general, but only with that "precise and definite" kind of causation which is implied in the generation by an earthly parent of one who has a kindred and congenial nature to his own. A man is not the parent of everything that is caused by him, but only of his children, whom he begets after His own likeness. And, even so, the analogical representation of Malachi does not extend the fatherhood of God to stones, or trees, or even to irrational animals, but only to reasonable souls, living personal intelligences, in some respects akin to that divine Person who has created them.

2. Another and somewhat similar indication of the general paternity of God, which may be briefly noticed, is found in the designation which an apostle has emphatically applied to Him, of "*the Father of spirits*." In Heb. xii. 9 there is a marked contrast between the "fathers of our flesh" and "the Father of spirits," from which we may infer that, while our corporeal frame proceeds by ordinary generation from our earthly parents, the nobler part of our constitution—the immortal spirit—is directly communicated to us by the Creator, so as to be in a peculiar sense His offspring. Accordingly, we find Him elsewhere designated as the "God of the spirits of all flesh,"\* and the "Lord who formeth the spirit of man within him;"† and are told, that when "the dust shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it."‡ In this respect God may be more properly styled our Father than those on earth whom we call by that name. For while it is only as His subordinate instruments that they can be considered as the parents even of our bodily frame, the soul that animates and dignifies it is imparted to us by the immediate agency of the "Father of our spirits."

3. A third indication of the general fatherhood of God, that

\* Num. xvi. 22 ; xxvii. 16.

† Zech. xii. 1.

‡ Eccles. xii. 7.

is very closely connected with those I have already mentioned, may be traced in the account given of man's original creation, as "made in the image of God, after His own likeness." It is by this assimilation to God that man was at first distinguished from all the other creatures. The heavens and the earth, and all material or irrational things that are in them, were created by Him. But they were not made "after His likeness;" and hence they are not to be regarded as His offspring. The soul of man, of all creatures that fall within our observation, is the only one that can be held as bearing, or as capable of bearing, a resemblance to the Eternal Spirit. And though sin has grievously marred, and in some respects wellnigh obliterated, the features of its conformity to Him, yet is there enough remaining to mark it out from all the other things which He hath made, as formed after a nobler type and owning a higher parentage.

Accordingly, we find that, notwithstanding the fall of man, the Scriptures in sundry places speak of him in such terms as show that this distinction has not wholly departed from him. Thus we find God declaring to Noah that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man."\* Paul requires men to worship in a particular manner, "forasmuch as man is the image of God."† And James speaks of it as one of the most grievous aggravations of an evil and unruly tongue, that "therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."‡ It thus appears that, notwithstanding their depravity, men have not wholly lost that semblance of the image of God by virtue of which they may be regarded as His offspring. They are still children of God, though degenerate and apostate children, who have forfeited His favour, and estranged themselves from His family.

I have already noticed the attempt made to repel this argument, by alleging that the creation of man after the image of God "involves nothing more than a capacity of understanding His will, feeling responsibility under it, and receiving reward or punishment in terms of it." If this were all, it would be

\* Gen. ix. 6.

† 1 Cor. xi. 7.

‡ James iii. 9.

difficult to prove that men, in their fallen state, have very seriously degenerated from that conformity to God which they originally possessed. For, fallen though they be, they are still rational and moral agents, distinguished from the inferior animals by their "intelligent responsibility." I presume, however, that the meaning of the objector is, not that "intelligent responsibility" is all that is involved in man's creation after the image of God, but merely *that it is the only thing involved therein that has any bearing on the primary relations between God and man*. But if this be his meaning, he assumes the very point in question; namely, that the primary relation of God to man is simply and exclusively that of ruler. For let it be once supposed that, co-ordinately with this relation, He sustains also that of a father, and who does not see that "creation after His image" must be held to bear on His relation to the subjects of it, as implying, not only "intelligent responsibility," but also that congeniality of disposition, which will animate them with childlike confidence and affection, and make it their chief joy to dwell with Him in close fellowship, and in all things to honour, and imitate, and obey Him?

And here I may be allowed to avail myself of an argument supplied by the objector himself, in vindication of the point for which I am now contending. For in his fifth lecture, when speaking of the manner of entrance into that divine sonship which is peculiar to believers, he assigns a prominent place to the great spiritual change, wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, which is figuratively termed *regeneration* or the *new birth*.

"The evangelist John," he observes, "makes the sonship to turn very much on regeneration, when saying of the incarnate Word, that 'To as many as received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Does not this intimate that, while acknowledging the act of grace towards us in which God gives us the standing of sons, He would represent our sonship as largely dependent also on the work of grace in us, by which God gives us the nature of sons?"—"Again, in the First Epistle of John, the statement that 'every



one that doeth righteousness is born of God,' suggests to the apostle the burst of adoring gratitude, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!' Thus John rests the sonship, which is in his eyes so wonderful, mainly on our being 'born of God.' Nor is this all. For, repeating the assertion, 'we are the sons of God,' he continues to dwell with singular earnestness and explicitness on what 'being born of God' involves, namely, perfect likeness to God hereafter—purity like His now—and having the seed of God remaining in us as the germ of an impeccable life."—"Keeping all this in view, I can scarcely doubt that John's design is to represent our being sons of God as connected very closely with our regeneration; and connected, too, after the very same manner that a man's being the son of his earthly parent is connected with his generation in time; or what I apprehend was more in John's mind, after the same manner that our Lord's being the Son of His heavenly Father is connected with His generation from eternity. If so, this makes sonship not merely a relation of adoption, but in a real and important sense a natural relation also. There must be adoption. But He who adopts, regenerates. The regeneration is a real communication to us on His part of 'His seed'—of what makes our moral and spiritual nature the same in character as His; perfectly so at last, and imperfectly, yet, as far as it prevails, truly so even now. And this regeneration makes the adoption real. The adopted sons are sons by nature, and that too, I am persuaded, in a very literal acceptance of the term."\*

To this statement I take, for the present, no exception, further than to the inordinate importance attached in it to the figurative term *regeneration*, by which the renewal of a sinner's nature is denoted. Probably John was led to use this figure, in preference to any of the others that are commonly employed to represent the same spiritual change, because of its peculiar suitableness to the subject of which he was speaking—the sonship of believers. In *our* view, indeed, he might have used with perfect propriety another figure, equally scriptural—that, namely, of a *new creation*; although, had he done so, our objector might have regarded him as "evacuating the idea of God's fatherhood, with respect to believers, of any

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 230-233.



precise or definite meaning—making the name a mere euphonious synonym for causation—and in truth denying that there is any real paternal relation on the part of God at all!” I admit, however, that when *sonship* is the thing spoken of, the figure of a *new birth*, which is employed by the apostle, is undeniably the more natural and appropriate.

At the same time, if any argument is to be founded on it in proof of the reality of the sonship connected with it, the validity of such argument must wholly depend on *the exactness of the correspondence between the figurative expression and the actual reality which that expression is used to denote*. For it would be a palpable sophism to call a thing regeneration which bears in it only a faint analogy to a new birth; and then, from the mere fact of its being so called, to infer, to a greater extent than is warranted by the analogy, the “real and literal sonship” of those to whom it is attributed.

Now, as to the reality which is designated by this figurative term, I know not how we can more appropriately describe it than by saying that the new birth is the commencement of the spiritual life—the initial step in that work of sanctification, “whereby we are *renewed in the whole man after the image of God*,” in “knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.” This is substantially the view which the objector himself takes of it, when he says that “being born of God involves perfect likeness to God hereafter; purity like His now;” “a real communication on His part of what makes our moral and spiritual nature the same in character as His—perfectly so at last, and imperfectly, yet, as far as it prevails, truly so even now.”

But what then? If this *renewal of men after the image of God* renders them really and actually His children “in a very literal acceptance of the term”—insomuch that “their sonship mainly rests upon it”—surely then a similar relation must have been constituted, in the case of the first progenitors of the human race, when they were originally *created after the same image*? Nay, this argument may be urged *a fortiori*. For our first parents at their creation, and before they had yet fallen, possessed the divine image in a much purer and more

perfect form than that in which it can be attributed to converted sinners, in the early and immature stages of their spiritual life. And if therefore a man who has newly been regenerated, notwithstanding the sins and infirmities which still beset him, may be held, by reason of his incipient renovation after the divine image, to be really a child of God; *much more* may it be held that Adam and Eve were children of God, when they came in their state of primal rectitude from the Creator's hand, bearing His divine likeness without as yet spot or blemish.

Our objector is here reduced to a dilemma, from which I see no possibility of his being extricated. Either he must admit that man, in his original state, was a son of God, as being created in His image; or he must renounce his doctrine of a true sonship as constituted, "in a very literal acceptation of the term," by the restoration of the same image to converted sinners.

4. Passing by a number of other passages of the Old Testament, which will more appropriately come under review when we proceed to consider how far the divine fatherhood was revealed and known to the ancient Jewish Church, the next indication of this doctrine which I may refer to, is that which St Luke gives at the close of our Saviour's genealogy.\*

After tracing upwards a long series of fatherhoods, the evangelist comes at last to Adam, and says of him, according to the same precise formula which he had used in all the other cases, "Adam, which was the son of God." This form of expression has generally, and I think justly, been held to intimate that Adam might be styled "the son of God" in a more eminent sense than any of his posterity, as having derived his origin, in body as well as in soul, immediately from the Almighty, without the intervention of any human parent, and as having been the first of men who was honoured to stand forth as the representative and image of his Maker.

We are now told, however, "that there is no idea suggested

\* Luke iii. 38.

in this whole pedigree or family-tree but that of *descent*; son descending from father until Adam is reached, whose descent is from no human father, but must be said to be of God; and that there is nothing asserted here like real fatherhood and sonship, as a permanent and personal relation.”\*

To this I may simply reply, that if Adam be styled “the son of God,” in the same terms in which Seth is styled “the son of Adam,” or in which any of the other persons mentioned in the genealogical table is styled “the son” of his immediate progenitor, then is there a divine fatherhood declared with respect to Adam, in words so plain that it is impossible to misconceive them. And as to the *permanence* of the relation, it of course depends on the continued existence of the persons who sustain the relation. Seth, as long as he lived, was the father of Enos, and Adam, as long as he lived, was the father of Seth; and inasmuch as God endures for ever, “without variableness or shadow of turning,” His fatherhood must be as enduring as Himself.

But here we are called to obviate another objection that is urged against the filial relation ascribed to Adam.

“There is not a hint of sonship,” we are told, “in all that is said of Paradise, and of man’s sin and fall there; nay, what is revealed of God’s treatment of Adam in the garden, is palpably irreconcilable with the idea of anything like the paternal and filial relation subsisting between them. Adam is tried simply as a creature, intelligent and free—as a subject under authority and law; not a hint is given of his having violated, when he transgressed, any filial obligation; nor, in the sentence pronounced upon him, is there any trace whatever of his being subjected to fatherly discipline and correction. All about it is strictly, I should say exclusively, forensic and judicial. It is the legal condemnation of a servant, not the fatherly chastisement of a son. No doubt the hope of recovery is held out, but it is held out in a way strictly and exclusively indicative of legal judgment and legal deliverance. The Deliverer is to prevail over the tempter by becoming Himself a victim; a victim to outraged authority; a substitute for those whom the devil has tried to ruin; bearing in His own person the doom impending by a

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 121.



righteous award over them; accepting the curse which the great deceiver has brought upon them, and doing so to the effect of destroying him and emancipating them. Accordingly, the remedial work of Christ is always represented in Scripture, in exact consistency with its representation of the evil to be remedied, as purely and wholly legal, forensic, and judicial." \*

To this objection it might be sufficient to reply that we do not maintain paternity to have been *the only relation* which God sustained to Adam. He unquestionably sustained also the magisterial relation; and it is no valid objection to the subsistence of the former, that some of the things done by Him are attributable only to the latter. At the same time, we hold that much of God's treatment of Adam—as, for example, His providential care for him, His intimate fellowship with him, His confidential communings with him, and the dominion over the inferior creatures with which He was pleased to endow him—cannot be regarded in any other light than as the exercise of a considerate and benignant fatherhood.

The truth is, moreover, that not a few of the most notable transactions which took place in the garden of Eden, can scarcely be said to come within the province of a judge or ruler, any more than of a father. For certainly it is not the strict function of a judge or ruler to impose "an arbitrary or discretionary conditional test"—still less to suspend, on conformity to such a test, the doom, not only of the person so tried, but of all who by ordinary generation shall descend from him. It was a *special covenant* which God made with our progenitor—such as does not properly come within the analogy of the ordinary dealings, either of parents with children, or of rulers with subjects.

In regard to the sentence pronounced upon Adam, I am not prepared to admit that it was "strictly and exclusively forensic and judicial—the legal condemnation of a servant, with no trace of the fatherly chastisement of a son." And in saying so, I am very much confirmed by the striking remarks on this passage of the sacred narrative that are made by the same

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 127, 128.



author whose views we are discussing, in his ‘Exposition of the Book of Genesis;’\* in which, among other things, he shows very beautifully that the sentence pronounced on the first fallen pair “was a remedial, and not a retributive, sentence, fitted in all its parts exactly to meet their case;” “setting them free from the deceitful bondage of Satan, the fear of instant retribution, and the shame of guilt,” and “restoring truth and hope and confidence.”

And what, in particular, is to be said of “the hope of recovery” held out in the very terms of their sentence to the first transgressors? This part of the transaction is not to be disposed of in the summary manner suggested by the objector. He fastens on the circumstance that “the *way* of recovery held out was strictly and exclusively indicative of legal judgment and legal deliverance,” and that “the remedial work of Christ,” by which the hope of recovery has been fulfilled, “is always represented in Scripture as purely and wholly legal, forensic, and judicial.”

I might take exception to the phraseology here used, as certainly somewhat unguarded and inappropriate. For it cannot be said that the method of man’s redemption is “*strictly and exclusively* indicative of legal judgment and legal deliverance.” It is indicative also, and even more prominently, of divine love. For “in this was manifested the *love of God* towards us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” Be it admitted, however, that *the method* of our recovery is indicative of forensic justice as well as of redeeming mercy,—the question to be answered is, *How came it to pass that any method of recovery whatsoever was provided, and announced to the transgressors, at the very time when they received their sentence?* Surely it will not bear to be denied, that *this* was a fatherly, and not at all a judicial procedure. For it is not conformable to the ordinary conduct of a judge or ruler, when called to pronounce sentence upon convicted criminals, to provide, at a costly sacrifice on his own part, for their free deliverance from the doom they have in-

\* Candlish on ‘Genesis,’ p. 91-98.

curred. And be it remembered, as bearing on this point, that the remedial work of Christ, according to the scriptural doctrine, is not the *procuring cause* of God's love to His fallen children, but is, on the contrary, *its result and manifestation*. It is a gross perversion of the atonement, as all intelligent believers in it will readily admit, to represent God as a stern and implacable Being, characterised by the strictness of the judge without aught of the mercy and tenderness of the parent, and as only induced to extend pity to transgressors by the interposition of His only-begotten Son. The atonement was necessary, not to make God merciful, but to provide for the exercise of His great mercy without prejudice to the claims and requirements of justice. God does not love sinners because Christ died for them. It is, on the contrary, because God loved sinners with a warmth and tenderness that are altogether inexpressible, that He gave His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for their sins. And thus may we see in the work of our redemption a joint manifestation of the judicial and parental character of that adorable Being with whom it originated. It was doubtless as a judge that the atonement was exacted by Him; but it was, no less surely, as a father that He provided it.

There is one part of this objection, however, which I have still to notice. "Not a hint is given," we are told, "that Adam and Eve violated, when they transgressed, any filial obligation." And "it is nowhere said that Christ atones for any filial offence—any offence committed by them as children against God as their Father. If they sinned in that character and relation, their sin, so far as appears from Scripture, is up to this hour unexpiated." \*

Now, as to the question, Whether our first parents violated any filial obligation? the answer to it depends on this other question, Whether any filial relation was sustained by them? For if they were God's children as well as His subjects, of course their offence involved undutifulness in both capacities. Now we have already seen, that there *are* sundry "hints

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 128.

given" that they stood, with respect to God, in the double relation of children and subjects. And in the particular sin which they committed, we may readily recognise, as one of its most prominent features, that lack of childlike confidence in God which induced them to give heed to the suggestions of the father of lies, rather than to the true and kind warning of the Father of their spirits.

As for the assertion, that "it is nowhere said that Christ atones for any filial offence," and that "if they sinned as sons against God as their Father, their sin, so far as appears from Scripture, is up to this hour unexpiated," a short and simple answer may be given to it in these words of inspiration, "*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"\* There is no distinction recognised in Scripture between filial sins and any other sins, in respect either of the necessity of an atonement or of the sufficiency of the atonement that has been offered for them. The circumstance of a sin being committed against God in the capacity of a father, as well as in the capacity of a judge, is doubtless to be considered as a special aggravation; but it does not so affect the character of the sin as absolutely to exclude the application or to neutralise the virtues of the Redeemer's sacrifice. If it did, we should then be forced into the conclusion, that for the manifold sins committed by believers, after they have been regenerated and adopted, so as to become, in a higher sense than other men, the children of God, there is no atonement made, and consequently no forgiveness attainable. But no; the great sacrifice cannot be thus limited, so as to exclude any sins from the hope of mercy. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin;" and if there be any offence that shall not be forgiven, it is not a filial offence committed against God the Father, but that mysterious "sin against the Holy Ghost," which seems to be excluded from the hope of pardon for no other reason than because it excludes itself; implying, as it does in its very nature, an obstinate rejection of the only means of obtaining pardon.

\* 1 John i. 7.



5. As a farther indication of God's general fatherhood, I may refer to that well-known passage in the apostle Paul's address to the Athenians, in which he thus speaks: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, *For we are also His offspring*. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." \*

Here the apostle not only appeals to the statement of two Grecian poets, as testifying that men are the offspring of God, but employs it as the foundation of his reasoning against the prevailing idolatry of the Athenians. We cannot suppose that in doing so he was using a mere *argumentum ad homines*, or assuming a position which he knew to be untrue and untenable, in order to gain for a time an apparent advantage over his auditors. For while quoting the saying, he shows at the same time the substantial grounds on which its truth may be established, by affirming that God "hath made of one blood all nations," and that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." So that the apostle must be held as giving his own full assent to the justice of that pregnant saying which he quotes, or as expressly affirming on his own authority the filial relation of all mankind to Him who made them.

It is here objected, however, that though Paul must be held to have "adopted this originally heathen utterance as his own," no inference can be drawn from it in proof of a "common sonship belonging to all men, and actually subsisting in the case of all men."

"For what is the use which Paul makes of it in his argument? It is simply to expose the absurdity of rational beings ascribing

\* Acts xvii. 26-29.



their origin to what is irrational; or, which comes to the same thing, worshipping in an irrational manner Him to whom they ascribe their origin, so as virtually to make Him out to be irrational. That is all—that is the apostle's only object, the sole and single point of his reasoning. Obviously there is no question of present personal relationship raised here at all; no question as to the footing on which men as individuals are with their Maker, what He is to them and what they are to Him. There is simply an assertion of a common source or origin. Are we not all His children? If this makes God a father at all, it is in the sense in which an ancestor is held to be the father of all his posterity; it is in the sense in which Abraham is called 'the father of many nations.' Our being all God's offspring in that sense sustains the apostle's argument, and is, indeed, all that is necessary or even relevant to sustain it. Anything else, anything more, would be out of place." \*

Now, if this really were all that the saying of the heathen poets, as quoted and adopted by Paul, can be held to mean, I cannot help thinking that the quotation of it was superfluous. For in that case it adds nothing in the way of furthering the apostle's purpose to what was implied in his previous affirmation, that God is the Creator and Preserver of all mankind. Paul evidently thought, however, that it *did* contribute something towards the force and pertinency of his argument beyond what could be derived from the general facts of creation and providence; and, accordingly, he specially fastens on it, and founds upon it, saying, "Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God" (not merely His creatures and dependants, but His offspring), "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Farther, admitting that Paul's immediate object was "to expose the absurdity of rational beings ascribing their origin to what is irrational," it does not thence follow that *this is the only inference* which can be logically drawn from the statement, that "we are the offspring of God." This was the only inference, as it so happened, which Paul at the time was concerned to draw from it. To have drawn from it "anything

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 116, 117.

else or anything more would," as the objector himself affirms, "have been out of place." But by thus deducing from it the only conclusion which his purpose required, he evidently recognises it, not as a mere rhetorical figure, but as the announcement of a real relation between man and God; and warrants us in like manner to deduce from it such further conclusions, suited to our purpose, as may be reasonable and legitimate. Besides, the question is not, *What use did Paul intend to make* of this saying when arguing from it?—but *What meaning did he attach to it*, as the foundation of his argument from it? And surely we cannot doubt that he attached to it its obvious meaning—the meaning which the plain and intelligible words employed in it could not fail to convey to every one who heard or read them.

When the objector adds, that there is no reference in this passage to "the question of *permanent personal* relationship," or to "the footing on which men as *individuals* are with their Maker, but simply an assertion of a common source or origin;" and that if God be here represented as a "father at all, it is in the same sense in which an ancestor is held to be the father of all his posterity;"\* one is at a loss to see on what conceivable ground, furnished by the passage itself, such assertions can be justified. Most certainly there is a plain allusion in this passage, not merely to the "common origin of mankind," but to "the footing on which men are *as individuals* with their Maker," when it is said that "He is not far *from every one of us*" (ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν): "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring." I am unable to conceive in what more expressive terms than these the apostle could have particularised "what men are individually to their Maker, and what He is individually to each of them." And as for the permanency of the relationship, it is no less plainly affirmed in the clause I have just cited,—"*for in Him we live, and move, and have our being*,"—besides being necessarily implied in the permanency and un-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 117.

changeableness of God. For most evidently there is no just analogy that can be drawn between the fatherhood of one of our remote and long-deceased ancestors, and the fatherhood with respect to us of the living God, who abideth for ever.

6. The next scriptural indication of the general paternity of God which I would refer to, is that which is furnished by our Lord's parable of the prodigal son.

In this beautiful parable God's dealings with penitent sinners are represented by the cordial welcome given by an affectionate father to a profligate son, so soon as he returns with deep contrition of heart, and with earnest purposes of amendment, to the parental home.

The first step in the downward career of the prodigal was his desire to be independent of his father, when, instead of being content to receive from him his daily supplies, he claimed to have at once given him "the portion of goods that fell to him." And this unfilial demand was speedily followed by removal from his father's house, departure into a far country, the wasting of his substance in riotous living, and degradation to the lowest depths of penury and wretchedness.

On the other hand, the first step towards his recovery was the thought of his father, whose love he had despised, and from whom he had so wickedly and recklessly estranged himself. "How many hired servants of my father's," he said, "have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

Here, you perceive, while fully acknowledging his unworthiness to be called a son, he does not by any means give up or disown his sonship. His request is, not to be made "*one* of the hired servants," but to be "*made like* one of them." He still recognises his relation to his injured parent. And it is as his father that he still speaks of him, when resolving to go to him, and to implore his pity.



The purpose was no sooner formed than it was executed. "He arose and came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,"—stopping his self-reproaches with tokens of continued affection, and inviting all his household to rejoice with him, "because his son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Now, it seems to me impossible to put any fair or just interpretation on this parable, without assuming that general paternity which God, as our creator and preserver, may be held to sustain towards all men as His intelligent creatures—and recognising the subsistence of this relation as at once a most serious aggravation of their sins, and a most powerful motive to urge them to repentance. On the opposite assumption, the parable ought to have begun thus: "A certain king had two subjects," or "A certain master had two servants." But who, in that case, would have discerned in it the same matchless power and pathos by which, as it actually stands, it is characterised? Evidently its whole point is lost, and its scope perverted, if we suppose it to be in any other character than that of a son who had wandered from the parental home, that the person represented by the prodigal is joyfully welcomed by the Great Father when returning to Him.

We are reminded, indeed, in dealing with this parable, of "the danger of drawing doctrinal conclusions from the minute and incidental details of illustrative narratives or stories."\* But this warning is altogether inapplicable in the present instance. For any one who looks at this parable must at once see that the sonship unworthily sustained by the prodigal is not one of its "minute and incidental details," but, on the contrary, one of its most prominent and essential features, without which its beauty and interest would be entirely destroyed.

Not such, however, is the opinion entertained by the ingenious author whose position we are controverting. He holds that to take such a view of the parable is "grievously

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 198.



to pervert its meaning—altogether to miss its spirit and scope, and to be guilty of bad taste, as well as of bad criticism and bad theology.”\* And how does he attempt to make good this assertion?

“Let it be conceded,” he says, “that the prodigal represents sinners generally—the sinners with whom our Lord was accused of being too familiar. The parable is His defence against that accusation, and nothing more. And what is His defence? Virtually it is this: He is the Elder Brother in the Father’s house. And He puts it to His accusers to say whether He best sustains the character and does the part of the elder brother, by acting as He is wont to act, in the way that seems to them so objectionable, or by behaving as they would have Him behave, like the elder brother in the parable.”

This interpretation of the latter part of the parable will probably be regarded by most people as very surprising. It has usually been supposed that the elder brother represents the Pharisees who blamed Christ for receiving sinners, and with whom He reasoned upon the footing of their own assumption, that they really were as righteous as they thought themselves. Others have held, perhaps with greater justice, that the elder brother represents a real Christian, perplexed with God’s mysterious dealings, and apt at times to look with jealousy or mistrust on the penitence of those who have been gross and flagrant offenders. Thus Dr Krummaeber, being once asked in an assembly of his brethren discussing this question, who was, in his view, the elder son? replied solemnly, “I well know now, for I learned it yesterday.” Being asked farther, he laconically said, “*Myself*;” and then confessed that on the previous day he had fretted his heart on finding that an ill-conditioned person had suddenly been enriched with remarkable tokens of the grace of God. But certainly of all the interpretations that have ever been put on this part of the parable, the one now proposed is the most remarkable. And I am unwilling to believe that it is the true one, so as to involve all critics and commentators who have expounded this interesting passage for eighteen hundred years, in one

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 198.

sweeping charge of "bad taste, bad criticism, and bad theology!"

But even if this strange interpretation were adopted, I see not in what way it would strengthen the position it is meant to support. For if Jesus Christ himself be the elder brother in the parable, then must the person represented by the prodigal be a *younger brother of Jesus Christ*, and as such unquestionably a child of God.

An attempt is made to escape from this difficulty by holding the prodigal to be a representative, not of those who are sons of God by creation, but of those whom it is God's purpose to make His sons by redemption. And, accordingly, Christ is supposed thus to reason with His auditors:—

"In my Father's eyes these sinners, with whom you say I associate too freely, are not what they are in yours. You regard them as outcasts—He *would have them to be sons.*"\* "His purpose is that I, the son of His love, should be 'the firstborn among many brethren.' And it is among these sinners that I am to find my brethren." "He has sent me to seek and to save them—to reveal Him to them as a Father, waiting to welcome them as sons. How think ye? Do I best carry out my Father's purpose by treating them after the manner you would have me treat them, as the off-scouring of the earth, or by treating them as my Father's children and my brethren?"

I need scarcely observe, however, that any such interpretation of the parable as this is altogether inconsistent with its whole structure. The prodigal is spoken of, from first to last, as no less really the father's son than was his elder brother. He was his son before he left his home. He continued to view himself as his son when in the far country. He arose and came to his father as his son, confessedly unworthy, indeed, to be so called, but still addressing his injured parent by the name of father. His father welcomed him as a lost son whom he had recovered; and the elder brother complained, not that an alien, in no way related to him, was brought into the family, but that their common father had given so kind a

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 199.

reception to "*this his son*, who had devoured his living with harlots." To say, after all this, that the parable is expressive, not of God's love to His unworthy and sinful offspring, but of His desire that sinners who had never sustained any filial relation to Him should be numbered among His children, appears to me to be as forced and unnatural a perversion of the plain import of a passage of Scripture as I have ever met with.

7. I may close this brief survey of the indications of the common fatherhood of God discoverable in the Scriptures, by referring to one which seems worthy of especial notice—namely, the "first and great commandment," as our Lord has termed it, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." \*

It will not, I presume, be alleged that this commandment is limited to believers in the Gospel. Unquestionably it is binding on the whole human race, along with "the second commandment, which is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It constitutes the sum and substance of the moral law, as originally written on the table of the human heart, and lies at the very foundation of all our duties.

The question arises, then, In what character or capacity must God be regarded by us, when yielding obedience to this commandment? Is it in the character of a supreme and absolute Ruler merely? Is it not rather in the character of a beneficent Father that men are to love God, with that full exercise of all their capacities of affection which the precept requires?

Doubtless it is as a Ruler or Lawgiver that He enjoins love to Himself in the form of an express statute. But the question lies behind, *What is the ground on which He does so?* For no one with whom we are concerned to argue will maintain that *the arbitrary will of God is the sole foundation of duty*, or that moral precepts are obligatory, *merely because God has*

\* Mark xii. 30 ; Mat. xxii. 37, 38.



*prescribed them.* Rather must it be acknowledged, on the contrary, that *God has prescribed such precepts* because *they are obligatory*, as being necessarily dictated by the perfections of His own moral nature, and by the relations which He bears to His intelligent creatures.

Now, it is difficult to see any sufficient ground for the universal obligation of this "first and great commandment," if the common fatherhood of God be ignored or controverted. A mere ruler, as such, may have the highest claims to our homage, reverence, submission, and allegiance; but cannot, in this capacity alone, be viewed as the appropriate object of our *love*. At all events, he cannot, as a mere ruler, be viewed as the appropriate object of *such love* as this precept requires—love "with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength,"—love in the utmost fullness of its exercise, and to the highest stretch of our capacity. Least of all is he the appropriate object of love like this if he be such a ruler as the great God, according to the doctrine of the author referred to, is held to be,—one whose rule is a mere matter of "law and judgment," in which "there is absolutely no place for anything more,"—one in regard to whom it can be said, that "a paternal government, in any fair and full sense of the term, imagined to spring out of the mere fact of creation, or to be implied in it, must be fatal to His prerogative;" and that "the notion of His government of the very highest of His creatures being anything else, in its principle and ideal, than *simply and strictly legal and judicial*, is an inconsistency, an intolerable anomaly, a suicidal self-contradiction."\*

It may be said, perhaps, that this precept has respect to God, as a Being possessed of every adorable attribute, apart from the consideration of *any* relation whatsoever, be it regal or be it parental, which He bears to us. And certainly there are some theologians who have maintained that God is to be loved exclusively *for what He is in Himself*, without any regard to *what He is or does to us*. They speak of gratitude as if it were a selfish principle, forgetting that the benefits by

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 26, 27.



which gratitude is excited are not benefits expected, but benefits already received, and not the less *ours*, be we ever so unthankful for them. And they insist that no personal considerations of our own condition and circumstances, relatively to the Almighty, must be allowed to mingle with the "pure and disinterested love" with which He is regarded by us.

The truth is, however, that we cannot thus separate *what God is in Himself* from *what He is and does to us*. For it is by His actual dealings with His creatures, indicative as these are of the relations which He sustains to them, that the adorable attributes of His character are manifested. And it is altogether impossible for us, as dependent beings who owe our all to the goodness of the Almighty, to form to ourselves a purely abstract conception of Him, and to love Him exclusively for His own essential excellences, apart from the endearing relations in which He stands to us, and the unceasing benefactions He confers upon us.

Happily, too, His word has not required of us anything so unnatural and impracticable. The ground assigned to Israel for loving and serving the Lord was, "He hath done for thee these great things which thine eyes have seen. . . . Therefore thou shalt love the Lord, and keep His charge and His statutes alway." \* "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications," † is the utterance of the man after God's own heart. "We love Him because He first loved us," ‡ is the testimony of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who had most deeply imbibed his Master's loving spirit. And to go no further than the precept under consideration, we cannot fail to see that this precept is so expressed as to comprehend all the elements of the fullest, and warmest, and deepest affection of which we are capable. Nor must it be forgotten that this commandment is proposed to us *as containing the sum and substance of our duty to God*. And hence the conclusion seems to be unavoidable, that if God be, as assuredly He is, entitled to receive from us, not only admiration and esteem, but confidence, reverence, gratitude, devotedness,

\* Deut. x. 21 ; xi. 1.

† Psalm cxvi. 1.

‡ 1 John iv. 19.

and, in short, every element of love which the most affectionate child is capable of cherishing for the greatest and best of parents, then must all these in their highest measure be included in the precept which enjoins us to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength."

Now, inasmuch as the love that is thus prescribed finds its appropriate object, not in a ruler merely, but in a father; and inasmuch as the precept which requires it was written on the heart of man at his creation, and is binding on every human being without exception; the inference seems to be altogether reasonable that God is the Father of all His intelligent creatures. Just as reasonably may the common fatherhood of God be thus inferred from "the first and great commandment," as the common brotherhood of men may be inferred from "the second, which is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

These scriptural proofs, taken in connection with the reasonable arguments formerly adduced, are, I think, sufficient to establish our position: that, apart from the special sonship of believers, there is *a general sense* in which all mankind may, with truth and propriety, be held to be the children of God—as deriving their existence from Him, as created after His likeness, as still retaining some traces of His image, though grievously defaced and distorted by the Fall; as largely partaking of His providential care and bounty,—and, may I not add, as lovingly regarded by Him, and tenderly commiserated in their sinful and lost condition?\*

It must be admitted, indeed, that fallen and sinful men cannot recognise God as in any sense their Father to the effect of rendering acceptable homage to Him, or of cherishing true filial confidence and affection towards Him, until they have been regenerated by His grace. But this admission, even when made to the fullest extent, does not invalidate either the fact of His paternity, or their obligation to acknowledge it and to

\* See Note C.

act upon it. In truth, they lie under an equal disability with reference to God's magisterial relation, and generally with reference to all the relations which He bears to them. Fallen men, until they have been regenerated, cannot truly acknowledge God in any of His characters. And certainly they are just as far, in their natural state, from a hearty and practical recognition of His sovereign authority, as from a cheerful and childlike reliance on His parental care. Hence, if the circumstance of men being unable heartily and practically to regard God as their Father until they have been enlightened and converted by His Holy Spirit, be held as a sufficient reason for denying that He sustains towards all men a general relation of paternity, the fact that they are equally unable, in their unconverted state, heartily and practically to regard God as their rightful Sovereign, must be deemed a no less sufficient reason for denying that He sustains towards all men the relation of their King and Lord.

This doctrine of the general fatherhood of God, which I have thus endeavoured to illustrate and to vindicate, appears to me to be of the very greatest practical importance. It is especially so, as furnishing an argument of remarkable power and of a singularly affecting nature, whereby to impress sinners with a just sense of their ungodliness, and by divine grace to bring them to repentance. The thought of our high original standing as children of God is fitted, if anything be, to humble us under a deep conviction of the shameful and baseness of those sins by which we have dishonoured and degraded it. And the consideration of our having sinned, not only against the authority of a just and sovereign Ruler, but against the love of a tender and affectionate Father, is calculated to move and melt the most stubborn heart, and to fill it with bitter sorrow and contrition. How touchingly does God appeal to us in this character! "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father?" "A



son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a Father, where is mine honour? And if I be a Master, where is my fear?" "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?"\* There is a power and pathos in these remonstrances, as uttered by Him in the endearing character of a Father, far beyond aught that can be considered as belonging to any mere general representations of the benevolence of God, in which His parental relation to us is not included. And there is no response so naturally evoked by them as that which seeks utterance in the language of the repentant prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

There is nothing that tends so much to keep sinners away from God as the hard thoughts and gloomy fears with which they are prone to regard Him. They have formed a wrong conception of His character. They think of Him only as a stern judge or terrible avenger. They cannot bring their minds to believe that He has any compassion for them, or any goodwill towards them. A deep distrust of Him has settled on their hearts. And as often as "they remember Him, they are troubled." Accordingly, they strive to banish Him from their thoughts, and, as much as may be, to live without Him in the world.

Of what immense importance, then, is it that they should be taught to regard Him as their Father in heaven—their much-aggrieved, indeed, and justly-offended Father, in whose household they are no longer worthy to hold a place; but still their Father, who pities them,—bears with them,—waits to be gracious to them, and is willing to have mercy on them; who solemnly assures them that He has no pleasure in the death of sinners, and is ready with great joy to welcome their return to Him! Surely such views of Him would tend to dispossess them of those dark suspicions by which they are repelled from Him, and would encourage them, with reassured confidence, to cast themselves on His fatherly love and grace.

\* Isa. i. 2; Deut. xxii. 6; Mal. i. 6; Jer. iii. 4.



It is true this doctrine is liable to perversion. But that is no more than may equally be affirmed of many of the most sure and precious truths of revelation. And it is no reason for ignoring or rejecting the doctrine, but simply for taking heed that we rightly apprehend it, and carefully apply it to no other than its proper uses.

One of the most common perversions of the divine fatherhood is that which represents it as *the only relation* which the Almighty sustains towards His reasonable and moral creatures. By thus unduly magnifying and exalting it, so as to supersede God's *rectoral* and *judicial* character, the necessity is sought to be dispensed with of any such remedial provision for the expiation of human guilt, as that of the great atoning sacrifice of the Cross. For if God be a kind and loving Father, but nothing more, there seems to be no reason why He should not freely, and without any atonement, forgive His erring children. And, indeed, the idea of His exacting an expiation would seem, on that supposition, to be derogatory to the tenderness and warmth of His parental love.

For this abuse of the doctrine the corrective is very obvious. We have simply to keep it within its proper bounds, and not to allow it to hide from us those other aspects of the divine character which are equally essential. The truth is, that no one human analogy is adequate to give us a full view of our relations to the Almighty. These are so manifold, that it is necessary to betake ourselves to divers relations between man and man in illustration of them. And, in particular, it is necessary to combine the character of a just ruler with that of a loving father. In the constitution of man, and in the course of divine providence, we have many indications of a system of moral government under which, as rational and accountable creatures, we have been placed. And in the Scriptures we have the most distinct assurances that God is a righteous Judge and Sovereign, who is greatly concerned to preserve the honour of His law, and to maintain the authority of His government. It is in this capacity that an atonement is required by Him, to harmonise the dictates of mercy with the

demands of justice, and to vindicate His rectitude and holiness in the remission of sins.

It must be remembered, however, that the parental character of God, no less than His rectoral character, is concerned in the atonement ; and it is only by combining these with one another that this great remedial provision for the salvation of a lost world can be satisfactorily accounted for. If it be because God is a King and Judge that the atonement was *required* ; it is, on the other hand, because God is a Father that the atonement is *provided*. For it does not at all enter into the functions of a king or judge to devise and supply, at an inestimable personal sacrifice, the means of deliverance to convicted rebels and condemned criminals. And thus does it appear that the common fatherhood of God,—which, as being implied in “the first and great commandment,” may be held to lie at the foundation of the Law,—is no less essential and fundamental to the Gospel. For it is only as a Father that God can be conceived of as having “so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I cannot refrain from quoting, as to this point, the following judicious remarks of Dr L. Alexander :—

“Avoiding extreme views,” he says, “we regard the fatherhood of God as having both a *general* and a *special* aspect ; the former, as flowing out of His relation as the Creator and Preserver of man, and so extending to all men, as His creatures and the objects of His care, who live, and move, and breathe in Him ; the latter, arising out of gracious arrangements into which He enters with individuals or classes of the human race—resting on certain special bases and conditions, and contemplating certain special results. God, as man’s Creator, becomes, we conceive, by that very act, both man’s Father and man’s King—the one as necessarily as the other. And out of this double relation flows naturally the whole course of God’s dealings with our race. God, as man’s Father, has surrounded him with the bounties of creation far beyond what mere equity requires ; God, as man’s King, has placed him under law, with the strong injunction, ‘Do this, and live.’ And since man has sinned and fallen, God, as his Father, still pities him, has compassion on him, and

desires his return ; but God, as his King, demands that satisfaction shall be rendered to His government and law ere man's sin can be remitted, and the sinner can be restored. I do not see how we can lose sight of either of these views of the divine character, without injury to our conceptions of God's truth, as revealed to us in His Word. If God were not both a Father and a King to men, the Christian system could not have existed. It is because God is a King that a remedial system was required ;—it is because God is a Father that a remedial system has been provided. It is the King who says, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' It is the Father who interposes, and says, 'Deliver from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.' God the King has denounced wrath to the uttermost against the workers of iniquity ; God the Father has 'so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' " \*

\* 'St Paul at Athens,' p. 206, 207.

## LECTURE III.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE ATONEMENT.

AT the close of my last Lecture I had occasion to advert to the bearing of the general fatherhood of God on the great evangelical doctrine of the Atonement. This subject, however, is so interesting and important, and has at the same time been to so great an extent erroneously conceived and keenly controverted, that some fuller discussion than we have yet given to it may be reasonably expected. I crave, therefore, your farther attention to the inquiry, How far our views, on the one hand, of the *necessity*, and, on the other hand, of the *nature* of the atonement, ought to be affected by the consideration, that God is the common Father of all mankind.

I. First, then, as to the *necessity* of the atonement, we are not to be understood, when maintaining this position, as venturing to affirm, on purely reasonable grounds, and apart from the testimony of Holy Scripture, that there was no other method by which the salvation of sinners could possibly have been effected. It would ill become creatures, whose faculties are so weak, and whose means of observation are so limited, to speak as if they had independent means of knowing what the great God could or could not have done, if it had so pleased Him, for the redemption of a fallen world. All that we affirm is, that the method of salvation which God has been pleased to reveal to us in the Scriptures, serves certain important ends in the divine administration, which could not, so far as we are



able to see, have been otherwise accomplished, and which sufficiently vindicate His wisdom and goodness in the appointment of it. Indeed, our position is mainly a *defensive* one, which we find ourselves necessitated to assume in order to repel the assertion, that an atonement for sin is so evidently superfluous as to be altogether incredible.

Now, one of the chief grounds on which it is alleged, by those who reject the doctrine of the atonement, that no such provision for the expiation of human guilt and the satisfaction of divine justice can be at all necessary, is just the subsistence of that tender and endearing relation which God, as the great Father, sustains towards His intelligent creatures. For surely, they argue, there is nothing to prevent a kind parent from freely forgiving the misconduct of his erring children, and cordially restoring them to his confidence and favour, so soon as they show themselves truly penitent for their faults. What need of satisfaction or expiation in such a case? We should bitterly censure the severity of an earthly father, if he laid any further chastisement on his offspring than was absolutely necessary for their correction and amendment; or if, when their offences were deeply deplored and heartily renounced, he still, in his stern inflexibility, withheld forgiveness until the fullest compensation had been made for the dishonour they had done to his dignity and authority. How then can we attribute to our heavenly Father a course of procedure, which, if witnessed in any of the "fathers of our flesh," we should unhesitatingly denounce as unnatural and unmerciful? Rather ought we to say, that if men, being evil, are ready to pardon the transgressions of their children, without exacting any further satisfaction than penitential acknowledgments and sincere efforts of reformation, much more must our Father who is in heaven be willing, on the like terms, to forgive every repentant sinner.

To those who thus argue, we might venture to reply that, even regarding God exclusively in His paternal relation, it is not by any means so clear as they would have us to believe, that He needs must forgive every penitent offender without requiring satisfaction for his sins. For, be it remembered,

God is not, like an earthly parent, concerned only with the superintendence of a limited household, the administration of which is altogether a private matter, to be regulated by Him according to His free discretion. No. He is the common parent of the human race; and not only so, but, as we have reason to believe, of manifold other races of intelligent creatures. And as such, it concerns Him so to deal with each individual member of His great family, as may be conducive to the true welfare, not only of that individual, but of all the other members. The largeness of His family, while not in the least affecting the fatherly love with which its affairs are regulated by Him, may, notwithstanding, affect very materially *the system* according to which the regulation is conducted. The household, in fact, has expanded into a kingdom. And though it be still the kingdom of our Father, we cannot conceive of it as otherwise administered by Him than after the manner of a just and impartial ruler,—by general laws, which are subservient to the public interests, and which must in every case be firmly maintained and fully vindicated. Hence, we may readily conceive that many things might be competent to the discretion of an earthly parent, when dealing with his erring children, which would not so well comport with the supremacy of the Universal Parent, by whom the whole family in heaven and earth is ruled.

It is not necessary, however, to meet the argument on this ground; for we have the clearest evidence that could be wished, from the constitution of our nature, from the course of divine providence, and, above all, from the express declarations of Holy Scripture, that God sustains the character, not only of a beneficent Father, but also of a righteous moral Governor, towards His rational creatures. These two characters, accordingly, must be combined in all our conceptions of the Supreme Being as related to us. And if it would be an error to ascribe to Him the stern inflexibility of a ruler apart from the merciful kindness of a parent, it would be no less an error to ascribe to Him the tenderness of parental love in dealing with His sinful offspring, exclusive of that concern

which, as a righteous Sovereign, He must ever show for the authority of His laws and the rectitude of His government. Nor are we to suppose that these characters, as sustained by Him, are in any respect opposed to one another. Rather must we view them as harmoniously united and co-ordinately displayed in all His dispensations. Least of all is it necessary to regard them as conflicting with one another in the matter of the atonement. For it must not be forgotten that He who, in His strict justice, exacted this great expiation for human guilt, is no other than the same adorable Being who of His infinite compassion and mercy hath provided it. So that we see in it the rectitude of the Sovereign co-operating with the love of the Father, with a view to the recovery and restoration of His fallen creatures.

But this is not the only ground, nor is it even the chief ground, on which the necessity of the atonement may be reconciled with the fatherhood of God. There is so much of a disposition shown by some modern writers to represent the atonement in the light of a mere "governmental display," or "stroke of administrative policy for upholding the authority of law and order in the moral world," that we should do well, in vindicating its necessity, to appeal, not only to the relation which God bears to us as a sovereign Lawgiver and righteous moral Governor, but also to *the essential attributes of the divine character*, as calling for some such remedial provision to expiate the sins of those who are to receive forgiveness. Be it remembered, then, that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works;" "a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He;" "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that cannot look upon iniquity;" "rendering to every man according to his deeds," and pledged to inflict "indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil." These are the true sayings of God respecting Himself. Doubtless He is our Father. But when so regarding Him, we must not ignore those attributes which distinguish Him, or think of Him as altogether different from what He truly is. You say, "He is our Father;" and you are warranted to say



so. But who or what manner of Being is it that you thus designate? *Our Father* is no other than this righteous and holy God—this sin-hating and sin-punishing God. And we may be very sure that, even in dealing with us as a Father, He cannot deny Himself, or act in such a manner as would be opposed and abhorrent to His moral nature.

It is true, He possesses other attributes as well as these. He is “the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” But this consideration cannot be held to supersede the necessity of an atonement, whereby divine mercy may be shown to sinful men on such terms as are compatible, not with *some* only, but with *all* the moral attributes of the Godhead. The sole effect of it is to warrant the persuasion, that whatsoever the holiness and justice of God may require, shall unfailingly be supplied by His loving-kindness and compassion. And I need scarcely remind you that this persuasion has been fully verified by the wonderful provision He has actually made for our redemption through the sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son, “whom,” as the Scripture saith, “God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness, . . . that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”\*

We are told, indeed, that there is no obstacle on the part of God opposing the free access of sinners to His friendship and favour, and requiring any method of expiation for the removal of it; but that the sole obstacle is on the part of sinners themselves, whose alienated hearts will not suffer them to believe that God is so loving and merciful as He truly is.

Now, if by “an obstacle on the part of God to the forgiveness of sinners” there be understood anything in the shape of *personal resentment*, or *implacable vindictiveness*, or *unwillingness to show mercy*, it is perfectly true that there is no such obstacle. But that there are what may be called obstacles of another kind, arising from God’s holy aversion to sin, His just

\* Rom. iii. 25, 26.



condemnation of it, and His determination to punish it, can hardly be denied by any plain reader of the Scriptures. How else are we to explain those frequent and express statements, that "God is angry with the wicked every day,"—that "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil,"—that "our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid His face from us, that He will not hear,"—and that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness"?\* A great part of the Bible, indeed, would need to be written over again before we can expunge from it the broad and palpable evidences of God's holy displeasure against sinful men, and of His righteous purpose to inflict judgment on their iniquities.

It may be said, indeed, that all such expressions as "wrath," "hatred," and "vengeance," as applied to God, are figurative expressions, used after the manner of men. Allow that they are so, this does not destroy their meaning. Men do not employ figures to *obscure* or *weaken* the import of their statements, but, on the contrary, to *make it clearer and more forcible*. And hence, when the inspired writers denounce the "wrath" and "hatred" and "vengeance" of God against wickedness, their evident purpose is to make us more clearly to see, and more deeply to feel, that there is *somewhat on the part of God* opposing the reception of sinners into His favour, which may be most fitly depicted by comparing it to those dispositions and feelings of the human heart under which, in these figurative expressions, it is represented. Most certainly, when God is said to be "angry with sinners," it would be a gross outrage on all reasonable principles of interpretation to affirm that what is figuratively called "anger" in such a statement exists, *not at all on the part of God against sinners, but solely and entirely on the part of sinners against God!* or, in other words, that it is not He who is said (figuratively) to be angry with sinners, but sinners who are said to be angry with Him! In like manner, when Isaiah uses these words, "O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me,

\* Ps. vii. 11; Ps. xxxiv. 16; Isa. lix. 2; Rom. i. 18.

Thine anger is turned away,"\* no fair interpreter would understand the prophet as expressing thankfulness that *he himself had laid aside his disaffection toward God*, and not that God had mercifully turned away, what is figuratively styled, His anger from the prophet. Let every reasonable qualification be applied to such statements, on the score of their being conveyed in figurative language, it must still be allowed *that they have a definite meaning*, such as we are capable of apprehending and appreciating. And that meaning evidently must be somewhat that pertains *to God*, some barrier on *His* part that needs to be removed in order that sinners may be reinstated in His favour.

Apart, indeed, from the testimony of Holy Scripture, there are natural feelings and instincts in the human heart which seem to bespeak the necessity of an atonement. I know not how we can otherwise account for the wide diffusion and continued prevalence of the rite of sacrifice. For though there be reason to believe that this ordinance originated in a divine appointment after the Fall, and was handed down from the sons of Noah to their descendants, we can hardly think that mere tradition would have given to it so firm a hold as it has ever been found to maintain on men of all nations and of every age, if there were not some principle involved in it that commends itself to the felt wants and deep-seated yearnings of the sinful heart. Nor is it easy to account, on any other ground, for the power which the simple and faithful preaching of the Cross has ever exerted. Our moral nature somehow compels us to respect the claims of holiness, even when we have infringed them. And it seems as if we could not ourselves be satisfied with any deliverance from the merited consequences of our transgressions, which comes to us in any other way than a way of righteousness. Hence we do not find that practically there is much difficulty in securing for the idea of an atonement a cheerful acceptance on the part of such men as are awakened to somewhat of a just sense of their own sinfulness. Mysterious as it may be

\* Isa. xii. 1.

in some respects to their intellect, it meets with a ready response and acquiescence from their heart.\*

Nor let it be thought that the necessity of an atonement, of which the natural instincts of the human heart thus combine with the testimony of Scripture to assure us, detracts in any respect from the fatherly love of God, as manifested in the work of our redemption. It might have done so if we had been left to find for ourselves the needful expiation; or if any other than He, by whom we are forgiven, had furnished the ground on which pardon is conferred upon us. But inasmuch as the Father hath Himself provided all that He exacts as necessary for our salvation, the costliness of our ransom is so far from diminishing, that, on the contrary, it mightily enhances and gloriously magnifies the riches of His grace. For in this was manifested the love of God toward us,—not that He thought so lightly of our transgressions as without any sacrifice freely to forgive them,—but that, with all His deep hatred of our sins, He thought so mercifully of us who were chargeable with them, as not to withhold that inestimable sacrifice which divine justice required in order to their forgiveness.

II. Having thus considered the fatherhood of God in its bearing on the *necessity* of the atonement, we now proceed to inquire, How far our views of the *nature* of the atonement may be legitimately affected by it.

And here, at the outset, one thing is very evident; namely, that, seen in the light of the divine fatherhood, the atonement cannot be considered as a means of *inclining God to be placable and merciful*, or of inducing Him to entertain towards sinners a kindness and compassion with which He would not otherwise have regarded them. It must be acknowledged that such a view of the Redeemer's sacrifice would be utterly inconsistent with the character which God sustains as the loving and beneficent father of all men as His intelligent creatures. But, happily, we are warranted at the same time to affirm, that such a view of it would be equally inconsistent with those

\* See Note D.



representations of the nature and intent of the sacrifice of Christ which are given us in the Scriptures. It may be that the atonement has occasionally been spoken of by ignorant and injudicious believers in it, in terms which would seem to imply that it is the means of appeasing a naturally implacable and vindictive Being, and of wringing from Him a reluctant and ungracious pardon, which, if left to Himself, He was indisposed to confer. But such is not the view of it, most assuredly, that has ever been taken by its intelligent and enlightened advocates. And such is as opposite as possible to the view of it that has been presented to us in the oracles of divine truth. The atonement, as set forth in the statements of Holy Scripture, as well as in the creeds of our own and other orthodox Churches, is so far from being *the cause* of God's love and mercy to sinners, that it is, on the contrary, the most wonderful *result*, and the most remarkable *manifestation*, of God's pre-existing love and mercy to sinners that could possibly be imagined. It was not with the view of *disposing* Him to be merciful to us that He required the obedience and death of His beloved Son, but simply with a view to the exercise of that mercy which He was previously disposed to extend towards us, in such a way as should be compatible with the perfection of His holiness, the claims of His justice, and the authority of His law. The atonement was offered for the purpose, as an apostle expresses it, of "*declaring the righteousness of God in the remission of sins.*"\* But it was not offered for the purpose of *inclining* God to forgive sins on such terms as should be consistent with His righteousness. For if God had not previously been inclined so to forgive sins, it is evident that the atonement would never have been provided by Him. The atonement had its origin in God's willingness to save sinners. Nothing but the very intensity of His desire to save sinners can account for His having provided such a sacrifice in order that they might be saved in the manner which He deemed conducive to the rectitude of His government and the glory of His name. Such is the clear and explicit

\* Rom. iii. 25.



doctrine of the Scriptures: for it is there written that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."\* And "herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."†

We cannot, then, be too emphatic in our affirmation that the mediatorial work of Christ is to be regarded, not as inducing God to love His fallen children, but, on the contrary, as having itself proceeded from the unspeakable warmth and tenderness of His fatherly love.

In making this affirmation, however, we must be careful to distinguish it from another statement which partially resembles it, but in real import is altogether different. I allude to the statement that the mediatorial work of Christ *is exclusively to be regarded as a manifestation of the love of God, without reference to any expiation of human guilt or satisfaction of divine justice to be effected by it*; in other words, that the purpose to be served by the humiliation and sufferings of the Saviour was, *not to remove any obstacle*, which the sins of men have interposed in the way of their being reinstated in the favour of God; but *to assure them that there is no such obstacle*, and thereby to induce them to cling with confiding affection to their kind and merciful Father, who, notwithstanding all their obduracy, is willing to receive them, and waiting to be gracious to them.

There is a well-known school of modern theological writers by whom such statements as this are frequently advanced. They utterly deny the existence of any *objective* barrier, in the shape of guilt or liability to condemnation, as opposing a sinner's return to the favour and fellowship of God; and hold that there is no barrier, except the *subjective* one of man's own unbelieving, self-willed, and sinful heart, to keep him back from the conscious possession and joyful recognition of his heavenly Father's love. Accordingly they maintain that the sufferings and death of Christ were not intended to expiate the guilt, or to exempt us from the merited penalties of our trans-

\* John iii. 16.

† 1 John iv. 10.

gressions, but simply and solely to show us *that God loves us*, and thereby to subdue the enmity of our hearts against Him; to disabuse our minds of those dark suspicions and distrustful apprehensions with which we are prone to regard Him; and to give us the fullest assurance we could wish to have, "that there is a bond between Him and His creatures which no rebellion of theirs and no law of His could set aside."\*

Now, that the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus Christ *were* intended to manifest the fatherly love of God, we fully admit. But that they were intended, or that they were fitted to do so, *irrespective of any expiation of human guilt or satisfaction of divine justice effected by them*, we hold to be utterly inconsistent with the Scriptures; and not only so, but to be, even on reasonable grounds, incapable of any satisfactory vindication.

The testimony of Scripture, with reference to this point, appears to me to be perfectly clear and unequivocal. Those numerous passages in which Christ is spoken of as "dying for our sins"—"taking away our sins"—"bearing our sins in His own body on the tree"—"shedding His blood for the remission of sins"—"putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"—"suffering for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"—"washing us from our sins in His own blood"—"giving His life a ransom for many"—"redeeming us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us;"—these, and many other equally explicit passages, are altogether inconsistent with the notion that the sufferings of Christ were meant to assure us of the love of God, apart from any efficacy attributable to them in saving us from the guilt and penal consequences of our transgressions. Nay, it is remarkable that in some of the most striking passages in which the love of God is said to have been "manifested" or "commended to us" by the death of Christ, the *purpose* for which God gave His Son to die for us—namely, that He might be "the propitiation for our sins"†—that "we, being justified by His blood, might be saved from wrath through Him,"‡ and "that whosoever be-

\* Maurice on Sacrifice, p. 209.

† 1 John iv. 10.

‡ Rom. v. 8, 9.

lieveth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"\* is very distinctly and prominently referred to. And hence we must necessarily conclude that it is not in themselves considered, but in respect of the expiatory virtues belonging to them, and the consequent spiritual benefits accruing from them, that the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus Christ were meant to assure us of the fatherly love and grace of God.

But not to dwell on the testimony of Scripture, which is too clear to require further comment or illustration, let us judge of this theory on its own intrinsic merits, as professedly supplying a *more rational* explanation of the sufferings and death of the incarnate Son of God than is furnished by the commonly received doctrine of the atonement.

When so judging of it, we must carefully observe the precise nature of the case for which the theory is meant to account. The case we have to deal with is not that of a divine mission, devolved upon the Son of God, to the discharge of which His humiliation, sufferings, and death were merely *incidental*. It is that of a divine mission, in the discharge of which these things were, by appointment of God, indispensably required of Him, as of themselves constituting the most prominent and important part of the great work which His Father had given Him to do. Both He and His apostles represent them in this light, as "things which Christ ought to suffer"—"things which it behoved Him to suffer"†—things which "God's hand and counsel had before determined to be done"‡—a cup which His Father had given Him to drink, and which was not withdrawn, even when He prayed that "if it were possible this cup might pass from Him."§ And the Scriptures, as we have already seen, when speaking of the love of God as manifested by the mission of His only-begotten Son, dwell most of all, I may even say dwell exclusively, on the ignominy and anguish to which He was subjected.

Now, how should this be? How should the sufferings of Christ be thus prominently and emphatically proofs of His

\* John iii. 16.

‡ Acts iv. 28.

† Luke xxiv. 26, 46.

§ Mat. xxvi. 39.



Father's love to us? If they were not in any respect directly efficacious in securing for us forfeited blessings, or in exempting us from merited penalties; if they were not in themselves instrumental in obtaining for us substantial benefits which could not otherwise have been enjoyed,—how then should we regard them as affording us an unparalleled manifestation of the fatherly love of God? Or how then could we derive from them any better ground of assurance than we previously had, that God is willing to be at peace with us?

Suppose—if it be possible to suppose anything so unnatural—that an earthly king should seek to conciliate his disaffected subjects by taking his beloved son, and depriving him of life before them, for no other than the avowed purpose of assuring the rebel multitude that his heart is full of clemency and kindness towards them, how would they be affected by such a spectacle? Can we imagine that it would have the intended effect? Even if the child were ever so willing a victim—cheerfully placing his life at his father's disposal—we cannot conceive that the taking away of that life, if no public benefits otherwise unattainable directly issued from the sacrifice, could, as an alleged proof of love towards the rebels, have the slightest tendency to bring them back to their allegiance. Rather might we suppose it to have a tendency to confirm them in their alienation from a sovereign whose treatment of his own son was as far as possible from being indicative of a kindly and conciliatory disposition towards his subjects. In like manner I am utterly at a loss to see how the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God should be held to manifest or commend His Father's love to us, if they were not the procuring cause of our deliverance from forfeitures and penalties which could not otherwise have been averted.

When God tells us in His Word that He so loved us as to give His own Son to suffer and to die for us, because,—for reasons satisfactory to Himself, although He may not have fully explained them to us,—this sacrifice was necessary to the extension of His mercy towards us consistently with the perfections of His character, the authority of His law, and the



welfare of His universal government ;—I can believe this, though I may not fully comprehend it ; because *here* the mystery lies in the plans and counsels of the Infinite God, which may well be expected to exceed my comprehension.\* And believing, on the authority of God, that for reasons which He deemed sufficient, although to us they may be in some respects unsearchable, this great sacrifice was necessary to man's salvation,—I can *then* see, in His not having withheld it, a marvellous proof of His love to a guilty world. But were we to be told that God gave His own Son to humiliation, sufferings, and death, without any alleged reasons for it in so far as God was Himself concerned, or any declared necessity for it as a means of extending mercy towards us consistently with the laws and principles of His moral government, but simply with a view to the *impression* which such a sacrifice might make upon the minds of sinners in regard to the fatherly love with which God is ever regarding them ;—*this* I cannot believe ; because *here*, instead of a mystery pertaining to the plans and counsels of the unsearchable God, in which more or less of mystery might be looked for, I find a *downright contradiction to my own consciousness* in a matter that is perfectly level to my comprehension ; inasmuch as my own consciousness tells me that such procedure on the part of God *has no tendency to produce upon my mind any such impression of His love as is thus ascribed to it*. In a word, the humiliation and sufferings and death of Christ are well calculated to convince us of the love and grace of our Father in heaven, when we view them as the means of procuring for us spiritual blessings, which, for reasons satisfactory to Himself, God did not deem it consistent with His character and law and government otherwise to bestow. But if they were not the means of procuring for us spiritual blessings which could not otherwise have been conferred, I see not in what respect the endurance of them by the Son of God (unnecessarily and gratuitously for any good which to us accrues from them) can be viewed as any such unparalleled demonstration of His Father's love to sinful men as we are taught to regard it.

\* See Note E.

But it may be here said that the sufferings of Jesus Christ, although no expiatory virtues be ascribed to them, are not to be regarded as altogether gratuitous, or as fraught with no real and substantial benefits to sinful men. There are other important advantages arising from them, by reason of which, even those who do not regard them as a ground of exemption from the penal consequences of sin, may yet see in the endurance of them by the Son of God a signal exhibition of the love and grace of His heavenly Father.

Let us look, then, at these other alleged benefits or advantages, and see how far they are fitted, in the absence of any propitiatory virtues attributable to our Lord's sufferings, to give to these sufferings that character which is claimed for them, of an unequalled manifestation of the fatherly love of God.

1. We are told, for example, that the Christian revelation, apart altogether from the doctrine of the atonement, is admirably fitted by its salutary instructions, its pure moral precepts, and its inestimable promises, to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind; and hence that the sufferings of the Son of God, as having been endured by Him when inaugurating this most beneficent revelation, and as having contributed to its confirmation and advancement, may be viewed as a signal exhibition of the love of God in sending His dear Son to reveal to us the Gospel, at the cost of being subjected, in behalf of it, to so great an amount of ignominy and affliction.

To this we reply, that the sufferings of Christ, when thus regarded, were merely ancillary or subservient to the Gospel, considered as a beneficial system of revealed truth. Nor were they more so than His preaching, His journeys, His miracles, His prophecies, the virtues of His personal character, and many other things, which, no less than His sufferings, were incidental to His mission and conducive to its advancement. And hence there does not seem to be any sufficient reason why they should be singled out, as in Scripture they uni-

formly are, from all the other incidents of His mission, and represented *as themselves constituting the prime elements* of that superlatively loving character which belonged to it.

According to the view now under consideration, it cannot be said that our Lord's sufferings were instrumental in procuring for us the Christian revelation. The utmost that can be said is, that they tended to confirm it by furnishing unequivocal proofs of His sincerity and devotedness. In this respect, however, there is nothing to distinguish them from the sufferings of His apostles and other primitive believers who sealed the truth of their testimony with their blood ; and it cannot be thought, surely, that in addition to these human martyrs there was any necessity that the Son of God himself should suffer and die in attestation of the Gospel ; and all the less so when we consider the abundant evidence of miracles and prophecies by which its divine origin has been otherwise authenticated. Nor must it be forgotten that, whatever weight may be now attached to the sufferings of Christ as tending to confirm the truth of the Gospel, they had, in primitive times, the very opposite effect. And in so far as regards the mere advancement of the Christian cause, we can scarcely doubt that this object would have been no less effectually promoted by His coming down in triumph from the cross to the utter consternation of His enemies, than by His submitting to that ignominious death, which was a stumblingblock to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks.

But be this as it may, it cannot be affirmed that the sufferings of our Lord were so evidently indispensable to the confirmation of the truth of Christianity, in addition to the other proofs by which it is established, and in this respect so eminently conducive to our advantage, that we needs must acknowledge, in His subjection to them for such a purpose, an unparalleled manifestation of the love of God. It avails nothing to urge, that they show us at how great a cost our heavenly Father was willing to send the Gospel to us ; for according to the supposition, there does not appear to have been any necessity whatsoever for incurring the cost ; it was,



so far as we are able to see, wholly superfluous; it might have been spared without the least prejudice to any substantial good which the Gospel has conferred upon us. Some lesser martyrdom, if martyrdom there must be to seal the truth of Christianity, might have sufficed, than that of the Only-begotten of the Father. And therefore the circumstance that *even He* was not withheld, if this was the only purpose of His sufferings, cannot be said to have been fraught with benefits to us, at once so unspeakably great, and by other means so manifestly unattainable, as to indicate on the part of God “a love that passeth knowledge.”

2. The same remarks may substantially be applied to another view of the purpose of that divine mission, in the prosecution of which our Lord's sufferings were endured, which some modern opponents of the commonly received doctrine have set forth, it must be acknowledged, in a very interesting and forcible manner. Christ came, they tell us, *as an Incarnation of Deity*, to place before us, in His own personal character and conduct, a much more lively representation of the invisible God than could by any mere doctrinal statements have been exhibited to us. He came to satisfy those yearnings of the human heart, when feeling after God if haply they might find Him, which an apostle on one occasion expressed when he said to Jesus, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” It was the grand object of His mission to “show us the Father.” By all the gracious words He uttered, and by all the beneficent deeds He performed, while, as “God manifest in the flesh,” He dwelt among us, He was continually “showing us the Father.” Going about, as He ever did, doing good, notwithstanding all the affliction and reproach to which in His labours of love He was subjected—ready, as He ever was, to comfort the sorrowful, to pity the wretched, to reclaim the erring, to rescue the lost, to welcome the returning penitent,—He showed us, in the warmth and fulness of His human sympathies, what manner of love His heavenly Father, of whose person He is the express image, entertains toward us.



Now there is much truth in this representation—truth that is very precious and very comforting, and which has, it must be owned, been too much overlooked. For, apart from its subserviency to the great scheme of human redemption, the incarnation of the Son of God possesses an intrinsic importance, as exhibiting to us the adorable attributes of the divine character in the person of one who is partaker of our own nature, and capable of being “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

But though there be truth here, it cannot be said to be either the whole truth with reference to our Lord’s mission, or even that portion of the truth with which for the present we have to do. What we are concerned with is, not the manifestation of tender compassion and loving-kindness which Christ displayed, but the ignominy and affliction, beyond the common lot of humanity, to which, by the determinate counsel of God, He was subjected, and from the endurance of which, even when He earnestly prayed that “if it were possible the cup might pass,” He was not exempted. The question to be solved is, not how a life of beneficence, in the course of which the Son of God was visited with severe sufferings, should have manifested to us His heavenly Father’s love,—but how that love should have been especially and pre-eminently manifested in the very sufferings endured by Him? And this question is not to be satisfactorily answered by any such mere reiteration of the thing to be proved, as seems to be the whole amount of the assertion, that to “show us the Father” was the grand purpose of His incarnation. Assuredly *His sufferings* cannot, in themselves considered, be held as illustrating the nature of that Invisible God who is necessarily exempt from human sorrows and infirmities. And, apart from their efficacy in securing the remission of sins, they tend to obscure, instead of heightening, any evidences of His Father’s love which He has otherwise exhibited to us. For it might be not unnatural to conclude that the very circumstance of the most beneficent person who has ever appeared on earth, being at the same time more than others a “man of sorrows”—afflicted

not only with bodily sufferings the most severe, but with inward and spiritual agonies the most excruciating (and that too, although, being perfectly immaculate, He neither deserved nor required chastening on His own account)—was an indication that the great God who thus visited Him was much more disposed to frown than to smile on all the sympathy and kindness He displayed towards us.

3. But here we are reminded of another purpose of our Lord's mission, by a reference to which His sufferings are held to be a signal manifestation of divine love, apart from any expiatory virtues which may be ascribed to them. He came, we are told, not only as the Son of God to reveal the Father to us,—but also, as “the root and archetype of humanity,” to present man to God in His own person as an acceptable offering; and gloriously to illustrate the principle of *self-sacrifice*, as due from all God's intelligent creatures to Him who made them, and as constituting their true dignity and excellence as moral beings.

“The Gospel,” it is said, “brings divine love and human suffering into direct and actual union. It shows Him, who is one with God and one with man, perfectly giving up that self-will which had been the cause of all men's crimes and of all their misery. Here is indeed a Brazen Serpent, to which one dying from the bite of the old serpent can look and be healed.” “The Father's will is a will to all good. The Son obeys, and fulfils in our flesh that will by entering into the lowest condition into which men had fallen through their sin. For this reason He is an object of continual complacency to His Father, and that complacency is fully drawn out by the death of the cross. His death is a sacrifice—the only complete sacrifice ever offered;” not, however, as expiating the guilt or exempting from the penalties of sin, but as “*the entire surrender of the whole spirit and body to God.*” “The cross is thus the meeting-point between man and man, between man and God. In it all the wisdom and truth and glory of God were manifested to the creature; and in it man is presented as a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God.” \*

\* Maurice's ‘Theological Essays,’ p. 141, 147, 148.

Now, that the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, with all the humiliation and suffering involved in it, is the most glorious instance of self-sacrificing devotedness that ever has been exhibited to the world, and that as such it is well fitted by divine grace to induce all those who are partakers of its benefits to "live no longer to themselves, but to the Lord," is a truth which, so far from seeking to dispute, we fully acknowledge. But that it can be regarded as possessing this character or as exercising this influence apart from those gracious ends to which it was conducive, as an expiation of human guilt and a satisfaction to divine justice, appears to me to be a position which, on reasonable and scriptural grounds, is equally indefensible.

*Self-sacrifice*,—understanding by that expression the giving up of our own will, the surrender of our own interests, and the renunciation of our own comforts and enjoyments,—cannot be said to be, *in itself considered*, or *purely for its own sake*, dutiful and commendable. We may say of it, what Paul has said of zeal. "It is good," says the apostle, "to be zealously affected *in a good thing*." Even so, it is good to be self-sacrificing for a good purpose. If our own inclinations point to what is evil, it is evidently our duty to renounce them. Or if the denial of them, even with respect to things that are not in their own nature sinful, be conducive to certain pious or beneficent purposes, which would be retarded or frustrated by their gratification, it is here also incumbent on us to keep them under restraint. But surely it is not for a moment to be imagined, that it is either a necessary or a proper thing to cross and thwart our own inclinations *for the mere sake of so doing*, and where there is neither anything evil in the indulgence of them; nor anything good to be secured by their mortification. To suppose that God is pleased with self-sacrifice, simply *for its own sake*, or *because it is self-sacrifice*,—and without reference to any ulterior ends of a wise and beneficent nature that are to be promoted by it,—would be to put Him on a level with Baal, whose votaries sought to please him by cutting themselves with knives and lancets, or with other capricious



and cruel divinities of the heathen, whose worship in a great measure consisted of self-inflicted tortures and aimless penances and austerities.

It is true that God requires all His intelligent creatures to surrender their own will unreservedly to His will. But then His will is never arbitrary or capricious. And though we may not always be able to discern the reasons or ends He has in view in His requirements, we may be perfectly sure that they are the wisest and the best. His will, to which He requires us to submit, is never put forth in the way of needlessly and aimlessly thwarting the inclinations of His creatures, but always in the way of prescribing to them such things as are wise, just, holy, and beneficial. In some cases, it may be in the discharge of our own duty, or in the furtherance of our own spiritual interests, that this self-surrender or self-sacrifice may be required of us ; in other cases, it may be with a view to promote either the temporal or the spiritual welfare of our fellow-creatures. And in all cases, whether we perceive it or not, we may be very sure that God has good reasons for everything He prescribes ; and that as often as self-sacrifice is exacted by Him, it is not for its own sake, but with an ulterior view to those wise and holy and beneficent ends which are promoted by it.

Now, to apply these remarks to the case before us, I need scarcely observe, that in so far as self-sacrifice consists in *the renunciation of anything that is evil*, there is no possibility of ascribing it to the Son of God. Mr Maurice, indeed, speaks of Him "as perfectly giving up that self-will which had been the source of all men's sins, and of all their miseries." But assuredly He had no such sacrifice as this to offer. He had not that within Him, in any respect or in any degree, to which all the crimes and miseries of men must be traced. To ascribe to Him "self-will" would be the grossest calumny. His wishes and purposes were, at all times and in all things, accordant with the will of His Father. And therefore, in so far as self-sacrifice may be displayed in the giving up of that which is intrinsically and essentially *evil*, there was evidently no room



and no necessity for it in the case of the immaculate and well-beloved Son of God.

It may be said, indeed, that though His own will was perfectly free from every evil bias, He did notwithstanding surrender it to His Father's will when He thus prayed in His agony, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt;" and again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."\* It is evident, however, that this, though unquestionably a surrender of His own will, was no *gratuitous* sacrifice. On the contrary, it was rendered on the express footing of its being, in the judgment of Heaven, absolutely indispensable. We are warranted to conclude from the Saviour's words on this occasion, that *if it had been possible*, consistently with the great purposes for which He had been sent into the world, that the cup should have passed from Him, He certainly would not have been required to drink it. And therefore we have here no evidence that self-sacrifice is, on its own account, well-pleasing in the sight of God, but rather a clear and convincing evidence of the contrary.

There is another sense, however, in which the Lord Jesus may be truly said to have set before us a glorious example of self-sacrifice. In so far as self-sacrifice consists in the voluntary surrender of dignities and prerogatives, and in the voluntary endurance of labours and tribulations, it was, doubtless, exhibited by the Son of God in an eminent degree when, "being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."† Here was a most notable instance of self-sacrifice. And *if we connect with it the gracious end to be accomplished by it*—namely, the deliverance of men from the penal consequences of transgression through the vicarious obedience and sufferings of their Mediator—we are lost in admiration

\* Mat. xxvi. 39, 42.

† Phil. ii. 6-8.

and in gratitude when contemplating it. But if this gracious end be ignored or set aside, in what light must the Saviour's unexampled work of humiliation and suffering be regarded? It can then only be viewed as a *gratuitous* self-sacrifice—a self-sacrifice undergone merely because it *is* self-sacrifice, and without ostensible reference to any ulterior ends of a wise and holy and beneficent nature that are subserved by it.

Doubtless there is one end to which it is held to be conducive—that, namely, of “*exemplifying the principle of self-sacrifice* as due from all intelligent and moral creatures to Him who made them.” But what does the assigning to it of such an end amount to? It evidently amounts to this,—that self-sacrifice, *for its own sake, or merely because it is self-sacrifice*, is dutiful on the part of man, and acceptable in the sight of God. It amounts to this,—that one who, like the Lord Jesus, has no other reason for subjecting himself to voluntary humiliations and gratuitous afflictions, may find a sufficient reason for so doing in the prospect of thereby inducing others, without any further or better reason, to do likewise. It implies, in short, that self-sacrifice is a principle so binding on all God's intelligent creatures on its own account, and that God is so bent on inculcating this principle of aimless, arbitrary, and gratuitous self-sacrifice,—irrespective of any ulterior ends to be promoted by it,—that in order to exemplify it He gave up His beloved Son to humiliation and suffering and death. Now, surely a hypothesis which involves such consequences as these is quite inconsistent with any view of the divine character which either reason or revelation has unfolded to us. And, as I have before said, it is much less akin to the nature of that wise, holy, beneficent, and gracious God, in whom, as Christians, we are taught to believe, than to that of the capricious and cruel divinities of heathenism, who were held to delight in aimless tortures and austerities.

Perhaps it may be here urged that the self-sacrifice of the Son of God, although in itself considered altogether gratuitous, is not the less on this account fitted to incite us to that abnegation of our own selfish and sinful desires, *which on our part*,

*as fallen creatures, is not gratuitous, but, on the contrary, highly needful and beneficial.*

To this statement we cannot assent. An instance of self-sacrifice, which, for aught that appears in it, is utterly aimless and superfluous, affords no reasonable encouragement in the way of example to the performance of other acts of self-sacrifice, which, so far from resembling, are strongly contrasted with it, by reason of the wise and salutary ends which are promoted by them. Rather might such an instance be regarded as *caricaturing* the principle of self-sacrifice, holding it up to ridicule, and bringing it into disrepute. A person may deny himself to ever so great an extent; he may submit to any extremes of suffering or deprivation; but if, so far as we are able to see, he is impoverishing or afflicting himself without any urgent necessity, or wearing himself out with oppressive toils and tribulations which are not directly subservient to any wise or useful purpose—we may greatly wonder at the line of conduct which he thus pursues, but cannot be reasonably expected either to commend or to copy it. But if, on the other hand, the self-denial be exhibited by him in some noble enterprise of piety or philanthropy, to the prosecution of which it is absolutely indispensable,—above all, if it be fraught with substantial benefits which are in the highest degree conducive to our personal advantage,—it then approves itself to us as a “reasonable service,” and may justly be held up as a model for our imitation. On this ground the course of suffering and humiliation to which the Lord Jesus voluntarily submitted, can *then only* become an encouraging pattern to us of that abnegation of self which on our part is indispensable, when some such adequate and beneficent purpose is assigned to it as that which is implied in the doctrine of the atonement.

I have one further remark to make on this theory. Even were it admitted that the sufferings of Jesus Christ are ever so fair and striking an “illustration of the principle of self-sacrifice as due from all God’s intelligent creatures to Him who made them,” the question still arises,—*Can they, when merely regarded in this light, be held fully to justify the*



*manner in which the Bible appeals to them, as furnishing at once the most evident and the most illustrious of all conceivable manifestations of divine love ?*

I scarcely think that any one will be disposed, on calm reflection, to answer this question in the affirmative. For what, according to the theory under discussion, is *the substantial benefit* which the death of Christ is intended to secure for us ? *Simply the presentation of a great example of self-sacrifice.* Now *this* is a benefit which cannot be said to be so conspicuous and pre-eminent in its value as to transcend all other tokens of the divine goodness. On the contrary, *most men cannot, without much difficulty, be brought to regard it as a benefit at all.* To most men God seems, when claiming from us self-sacrifice, and urging us by the example of Christ or otherwise to yield it to Him, to be rather insisting very strictly on His own rights, than very notably conferring a benefaction on His intelligent creatures. And even in the case of earnest and devoted Christians, whose minds are enlightened and renovated by the Holy Spirit, a full appreciation of the excellence of self-sacrifice, whensoever their own will is at variance with the will of God, is not by any means an early or an easy attainment, but one into which, by Divine grace, they are progressively schooled by much sharp discipline, and by long experience of the Christian life. On these grounds, I hold that the view of our Lord's sufferings, which is set forth in the theory now under consideration, is not such as to justify the statements of Scripture in regard to them, as of all evidences of Divine love incomparably the most illustrious. Nay, I may almost venture to affirm, that if, *in respect merely of the illustration of self-sacrifice afforded by it*, the Saviour's death be considered as exhibiting a clear, conspicuous, and strikingly affecting proof of the fatherly love of God, beyond what is furnished by all His other benefits, it can be so considered only on the principle *that mankind are so fully capable of appreciating the matchless worth and blessedness of self-sacrifice as to need no example, like that of Jesus, to commend it to them !*

On the whole, it does not appear that this theory supplies



any valid ground on which our Lord's sufferings can be viewed as an unequalled manifestation of the love of God. Be it remembered that these sufferings are represented in Scripture as not merely *incidental* but *essential* to His divine mission. They are set forth as themselves occupying a most prominent and important place among the appointed objects for which He was sent into the world. All that He endured of ignominy and affliction came upon Him by the determinate counsel, and much of it by the immediate agency, of His heavenly Father. No human instrumentality was employed, in the dark hour of His agony, to render His soul "exceeding sorrowful." Nor was it the pangs inflicted on Him by wicked men so much as the mysterious hiding of His Father's countenance, that led Him to cry out in bitter anguish on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Such being the case, we cannot say of the Lord Jesus, as of Paul, or of Peter, or of James, or of Stephen, or of any other self-devoted sufferer in the cause of truth, that He sacrificed Himself, in the sense merely of enduring afflictions which were incident to the work He had undertaken to accomplish. For that work mainly was to endure afflictions—to humble Himself from the glories of His heavenly condition to the toils and trials and sorrows of His earthly state—to lead among men a life of suffering and ignominy, and ultimately to lay down His life upon the cross. And hence we must either suppose that His self-sacrifice was directly conducive to some such great and good purpose as, according to our view, the Scriptures have assigned to it,—as an expiation of human guilt, and a satisfaction to divine justice; or else we must regard it as a mere instance of self-sacrifice, terminating in itself—dictated by no necessity, but required and accepted by God purely for its own sake, as an act of unqualified submission to His sovereign will, and without reference to any conceivable good that could be promoted by it. And this latter conclusion, which seems to be our only alternative if the commonly received doctrine of the atonement be set aside, is utterly inconsistent, not merely with any scriptural, but with any reasonable views

of the divine character ; and specially inconsistent with any view that may be taken of the sufferings and death of Christ as an exhibition of His Father's love.\*

There are some other plausible theories which have been proposed, with the view of explaining and accounting for our Lord's afflictions, apart from the expiatory virtues attributable to them as a true and proper vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world. And I shall endeavour to show you, in my next Lecture, that these theories also furnish no sufficient ground on which the sufferings of Christ can be regarded as a superlative manifestation of the fatherly love and grace of God.

\* See Note F.

## LECTURE IV.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE ATONEMENT.

(*Continued.*)

IN my last Lecture your attention was directed to the bearing of the general fatherhood of God on the evangelical doctrine of the Atonement. And after endeavouring to show that the *necessity* of the atonement cannot be held to be in any respect superseded, I proceeded to consider how far our views of the *nature* of this remedial provision for our fallen state ought to be affected by the consideration that God is the common Father of all mankind.

It is quite certain that, seen in the light of the divine fatherhood, the atonement cannot be considered as a means of inducing God to be more compassionate and merciful to sinful men than otherwise He was inclined to be; but it is equally certain, that any such view of it is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of Holy Scripture. "The sacrifice of Christ," says Archbishop Magee, "was never deemed by any who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of the atonement to have *made* God placable, but is merely viewed as the means appointed by divine wisdom through which He bestows forgiveness; and, agreeably to this, do we not find this sacrifice everywhere spoken of as ordained by God himself?" \*

It is indeed going too far to affirm that the view here disclaimed of the sacrifice of Christ was *never* entertained "by

\* Magee's Works, vol. i. p. 15.

any who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of the atonement." For it must be owned, that in loose discourses and popular hymns, emanating from professed believers in that doctrine, we occasionally meet with rash and injudicious statements, which, if literally construed, would convey the impression that the mediatorial work of the Redeemer was designed to avert from us the wrath of an implacable Being who is in Himself disinclined to show mercy to us, until, by the intercession and sufferings of His beloved Son, a sullen and ungracious pardon is extorted from Him. And I very much fear that some such erroneous notion prevails to no inconsiderable extent among ignorant and uneducated people at the present day. But it is most certain that any such mode of representing the doctrine of the atonement is utterly repudiated by its intelligent and enlightened advocates, and is as opposite as possible to the view of it which has been set forth in the oracles of divine truth.\* The atonement, as there revealed, was not offered for the purpose of disposing God to be merciful to sinful men, but simply with a view to the exercise of that mercy,—with which, as their loving Father, He ever was disposed to regard them,—in such a way as should be compatible with the claims of His justice and the authority of His law. *The atonement had its origin in the Father's willingness to save sinners.* So far is it from being the procuring cause of the divine mercy, that it is emphatically represented in the Scriptures as the most remarkable manifestation of God's pre-existing love and mercy to a sinful world that could possibly be imagined. In this light the Saviour himself is careful to present it. Instead of ascribing to His Father all the sternness and severity, and claiming as His own all the tenderness and compassion, He takes especial pains to impress us with the great truth, that the purpose of His mission was to proclaim the loving message and to execute the loving will of His Father. "I came down from heaven," He says, "not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one who seeth the

\* See Note G.



Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life.”\* “I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”† “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”‡ To the same effect are the statements of His apostles: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”§ “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”||

Such is the scriptural representation of the atonement,—not as a means of extorting salvation from an implacable God who was unwilling to bestow it,—but as a means of conferring salvation consistently with the perfections of His character, the authority of His law, and the rectitude of His government, *of which God himself was the author and the source.* And I need scarcely add, that with such a representation of it the doctrine of the divine fatherhood beautifully harmonises. For it is only in the character of a Father that God can be conceived of as having displayed to us so astonishing a manifestation of His grace and love.

But here a question occurs which claims our especial attention. It being admitted that the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God are held forth in Scripture as singularly displaying to us the fatherly love of God, can it be truly said *that they were intended and fitted to do so, irrespective of any expiation of human guilt or satisfaction to divine justice that was rendered by them?*

Now, in so far as this question falls to be determined by the testimony of Holy Scripture, we have already seen that it must be answered in the negative. For it is remarkable, that in all the most striking passages in which the love of God is said to have been “manifested” or “commended” to us by the suffer-

\* John vi. 38, 40.

† John xvii. 4.

‡ John iii. 16.

§ 1 John iv. 9, 10.

|| Rom. v. 8.

ings of Jesus Christ, *the purpose* for which God gave His Son to die for us—namely, that He might be “the propitiation for our sins,” that “we, being justified by His blood, might be saved from wrath through Him,” and “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”—is very distinctly and prominently referred to.

Farther, if this question be judged of on reasonable grounds, we have seen that the abasement and sufferings of Jesus Christ cannot be considered as affording us any notable proof of the fatherly love of God, except in so far as they may have been instrumental in averting from us evils which could not otherwise have been removed, or securing for us blessings which could not otherwise have been obtained. Accordingly, it behoves those who would answer the question in the affirmative to point out some substantial benefits or advantages accruing to us from the sufferings of the Son of God, which are fitted, in the absence of any propitiatory virtues such as we hold to be attributable to these sufferings, to give to them the character so emphatically claimed for them of an unequalled manifestation of the divine love.

*Three* such attempts to show that the Redeemer’s sufferings may be considered as possessing this character, apart from any efficacy they may have had in expiating human guilt and satisfying divine justice, have been already brought under examination. And without recapitulating the arguments by which I endeavoured in my last Lecture to show their insufficiency, I now proceed to the consideration of a *fourth* attempt, which will, I think, be found to be equally unavailing.

4. The sufferings of Christ are viewed by some writers as having mainly consisted in His deep *sympathy* with those fallen creatures whose nature He assumed. Instead of regarding Him as *substituted for us*, they hold that He *identified Himself with us*; and that He so fully entered into the realisation of all the sins and miseries of humanity, as to confess them and sorrow for them as if they had been His own.

Thus Mr Maurice says of Him, that “He bore in the truest

and strictest sense the sins of the world, feeling them with that anguish with which only a perfectly pure and holy being, who is also a perfectly sympathising and gracious being, can feel the sins of others." \* In like manner Mr Campbell speaks of Him, in His dealing with the Father in relation to our sins, as "making a perfect confession of these sins ;—a confession which must in its own nature have been *a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man ;*"—as "meeting the divine wrath against sin with a perfect response out of the depths of His divine humanity,—a response which (excepting the personal consciousness of sin) has all the elements of a perfect contrition and repentance," and "by which the wrath of God is rightly met, and divine justice duly satisfied ;" and again, as "absorbing and exhausting the divine wrath against our sins in that adequate confession and perfect response on the part of man, which was possible only to the infinite and eternal righteousness in humanity." †

The like views are still more clearly expressed by an able anonymous author belonging to the same school.

"The natural consequence," he says, "of a love which made Christ identify Himself with sinners was, that He should feel the pressure of human sin as a pressure on His own spirit. We know how deeply one human being may suffer in the suffering of another ; and those who know what real love is, know that the pain of sympathy with a beloved object is often harder to endure than any suffering merely personal ; the suffering of a mother, for instance, in that of her child. But in spiritual beings, physical suffering must always be regarded as secondary in comparison with mental suffering. To realise the sin of one with whom we are identified by love, is greater suffering than any physical pain we could endure for him ; and the intensity of the suffering will be in proportion as the nature of him who endures it is alien from the sin."

"Suppose a son has committed a great crime, and that he meets his father looking worn and sad and emaciated, and is told that the offence he has committed is the cause of it. There are two ways in which the son might understand this : either that his father had

\* 'Theological Essays,' p. 141.

† Campbell on the Atonement, p. 134, 135, 145.



literally borne the punishment due to him,—that he had endured the actual confinement and privations of a prison,—the chastisement of whatever kind to which he himself had been condemned, and thus by physical suffering had been reduced to the state in which he was ; or that the intensity of his love, grief, and anxiety had undermined his health and produced the same outward effects. Which of these ways of accounting for the outward manifestations of suffering would most undeniably express love in a moral and spiritual being ? In the one case the change in his outward appearance would be the incontestable evidence of the intensity of his feelings ; in the other case his feelings may or may not have been in exercise.” Accordingly, this writer holds, that in thinking of Christ as “suffering for us, the just for the unjust,” we ought not to allow our minds “to dwell on the physical suffering, but rather on the love that made outward afflictions so agonising to the *spirit* of the Saviour.”\*

Now, in meeting these and similar representations, we might fairly express a doubt whether the mere circumstance of the Son of God having assumed the human nature, implies that thorough identification of Himself with us which should lead Him intensely to feel and heartily to deplore our sins and miseries, as if they were His own. It must indeed be admitted that, as very man, He was capable of being “touched with the feeling of our *infirmities*.” But what fellow-feeling could He have with us as regards *our sins* ? With these, as a *sinless* man, He was surely incapable of taking part in the way of sympathising with them. He could not, by mere sympathy, make our sins His own, when in Himself there was nothing in the least akin, but rather everything uncongenial and repugnant to them. But even if we suppose Him fully capable of being “touched with the feeling,” not only of our sorrows, but of our sins, what was there to call His sympathetic capacities into exercise to so great an extent as this theory supposes ? His mere assumption of the human nature is no sufficient reason for it. He must have had some other and closer bond of fellowship with us in order to account for the exceeding fulness of His sympathy. How is it in the illustra-

\* ‘Fragments of Truth,’ p. 243, 244.



tive instance above referred to? It is not for the crime of one, to whom He is allied merely as partaking of the same common attributes of humanity, that the heart-broken parent grieves as if he had himself been chargeable with it, but for the crime committed *by his own son*, with whom, by the closest ties of kindred, he is identified, and in whose shame and wretchedness he feels himself to be involved. And so in the case of Christ. That those human sympathies of which as very man He was susceptible, should have been actually evoked in our behalf,—above all, that they should have been evoked in such a degree that He might, in respect of them, be considered as “bearing in the truest and strictest sense the sins of the world,” and might even be said to “confess them, and to sorrow for them with deep contrition of heart, as if they had been His own,” is more than a mere community of nature will account for. It evidently bespeaks an intimacy of fellowship with us, a closeness of interest in us, an identity of position with us, which, as subsisting with reference to things that are altogether foreign to His own holy and blessed nature, comes little, if at all, short of actual substitution. And truly there seems to be no very intelligible reason why His substitution in the room of sinners should be so much opposed by those who do not hesitate to speak of Him as “perfectly confessing our sins, with an adequate sorrow and contrition on account of them,” and as “meeting the divine wrath against sin with a response which has in it all the elements of a perfect repentance.” Such representations, so far as they are intelligible, would seem to imply, on the part of the Redeemer, a *self-imputation* of the sins of fallen men, to even a greater extent than the advocates of His vicarious substitution in the room of sinners would contend for.

But farther, admitting that the sympathy of Christ with those sinful creatures whom He came into the world to save was one element of His sufferings which ought not to be overlooked, we may confidently say that it cannot be regarded as constituting the whole, or even the principal part, of these sufferings.

Let us look at the facts of the case. Let us take the actual record of the Saviour's afflictions as given in the New Testament, and more particularly of the final consummation of them in the agonising scenes of the garden and the cross. It cannot be said, surely, that when praying in His agony, that "if it were possible this cup might pass from Him," *He was seeking deliverance from those sympathetic woes* with which the thought of human sins and miseries had afflicted Him. This would be, in effect, to say that He was earnestly wishing His own sympathies to be deadened, and His own heart to be hardened against the sins and sorrows of humanity—a supposition utterly at variance with His loving nature. It is equally obvious that His lamentation on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" was intensely *personal* in its reference to *His own* afflictions, wherewith it had pleased God mysteriously to visit Him, and not to any mere fellow-feeling for the afflictions of others. And indeed the whole strain and tenor of His own statements, when He speaks, both before His death and after His resurrection, of "giving His life a ransom for many," "shedding His blood for the remission of sins," "laying down His life for His sheep," "giving His flesh for the life of the world," "behoving to suffer and to rise from the dead, that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in His name among all nations,"\* cannot, without the most violent misconstruction, be made to import a mere sympathy with our sins and miseries, or anything short of a vicarious endurance of penalties due to us, that we might be exempted from them.

The same remarks are applicable to the words of the apostles respecting the causes and ends of our Lord's sufferings. When we find them speaking of Christ as "delivered for our offences," "justifying us by His blood," "reconciling us to God by His death," "redeeming us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us," as "once offered to bear the sins of many," as "putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," as "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree,"

\* Mat. xx. 28, xxvi. 28 ; John x. 15, vi. 51 ; Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

as “suffering for sins, the just for the unjust,” and as “washing us from our sins in His own blood,”\* it really seems to be about as hopeless an effort as could by possibility be imagined, to resolve these, and many other expressions of like import, into mere intimations of the closeness and intensity of feeling with which He identified Himself with us in our fallen condition.

The truth is, that the sympathy of Christ is but seldom spoken of in the New Testament, in comparison with the frequency of the allusions to His personal sufferings. And when the two subjects are at any time brought together, it is with the view, not of resolving His sufferings into sympathy, but of inferring His readiness to sympathise with us, from the sufferings to which in His own person He was subjected. His sufferings were a cup of which He had *Himself* to drink, a baptism with which He had *Himself* to be baptised. And it will be remembered that, on one memorable occasion, when referring to the fellowship between Himself and His disciples in the endurance of suffering, He did not represent Himself as sympathetically drinking of *their* cup, and sharing in *their* baptism, but asked them, “Are *ye* able to drink of the cup that *I* shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that *I* am baptised with?”†

The chief question, however, with which we are for the present concerned is, How can the sufferings of Christ, according to this view of them, be held as commending to us the fatherly love of God? That *the love of Christ* should be displayed by them we can well conceive. For He must indeed have very warmly loved us, if His sympathy with our sins and miseries was so intense as to give its full meaning to all that we are taught in Scripture respecting the unutterable anguish with which He was afflicted; but *that the love of the Father should be manifested to us* in the sympathetic agonies thus endured by His innocent, holy, and well-beloved Son, is

\* Rom. iv. 25, v. 9, 10; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. ix. 26, 28; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Rev. i. 5.

† Mat. xx. 22.



utterly inexplicable except upon the principle that we derive from them certain substantial benefits, of which we should not otherwise have become possessed. Some good must accrue to us from them, not otherwise to be obtained, or some evil must be averted from us by them, not otherwise to be removed or remedied, before we can see in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in whatsoever way we may suppose them to have come upon Him, any proof of the love with which His Father is regarding us.

Of the justice of this remark some of the ablest advocates of the theory under review seem to be fully aware ; and accordingly they speak of the sympathetic sorrows of Christ as having been in some respects of an expiatory tendency. Thus Mr Campbell holds that “the divine righteousness in Christ, appearing on the part of man and in humanity, met the divine righteousness in God condemning man’s sin, by the true and righteous confession of its sinfulness uttered in humanity ; and *righteousness as in God was satisfied and demanded no more than righteousness as in Christ thus presented.*” \* This confession of our sins on the part of Christ, the same writer declares to have been “a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man,” and to have had in it “all the elements of a perfect contrition and repentance, excepting the personal consciousness of sin, and thus to have *accorded to divine justice that which is its due, and which could alone satisfy it.*” † And again he observes, “Without the assumption of an imputation of our guilt, and in perfect harmony with the unbroken consciousness of personal separation from our sins, the Son of God, bearing us and our sins on His heart before the Father, must needs respond to the Father’s judgment on our sins, with that confession of their evil and of the righteousness of the wrath of God against them, and holy sorrow because of them, which were due ; due in the truth of things,—due on our behalf, though we could not render it,—*due from Him as in our nature and our true brother,*—what he must needs feel in Himself because of the holiness and love

\* Campbell on the Atonement, p. 142.

† Ibid., p. 134, 135.



which were in Him,—what He must needs utter to the Father in expiation of our sins when He would make intercession for us.” \*

Thus, according to the theory under consideration, the sympathy of the Son of God incarnate with our sinful condition is held to have been available for our benefit, by leading Him to render in behalf of sinners a perfect confession of sin and an adequate repentance, with which divine justice is satisfied, and a full expiation is made for human guilt.

To my mind, however, this view of the atonement is encompassed with difficulties which seem to be insuperable.

(1.) If *vicarious penalties*, endured by the innocent in the room of the guilty, be a mystery which some minds are slow to entertain, what shall we say of *a confession of our sin's having in it all the elements of perfect contrition and repentance*, offered up in our behalf by one who has all the while “the unbroken consciousness of personal separation from those sins” which He thus sympathetically confesses and deplures? Surely there is here an incomparably greater mystery. Nay, is there not rather an absolute impossibility? For how is it at all conceivable, that a perfectly holy being should undergo *repentance and contrition* for sins of which He has no personal consciousness?

The truth is, that however poignant may have been the Saviour's sympathetic sorrow for our sins, it cannot, in the absence of all “personal consciousness of them,” be said to have had in it *any* of the elements, far less “*all* the elements, of a perfect contrition and repentance on account of them.” At least it must be held as *lacking that one element*, which is unquestionably of all others the most essential. For the very thing which characteristically distinguishes *penitential* sorrow from every other kind of sorrow is just that deep “personal consciousness of sin” which, in the case of our Saviour's affliction, was entirely wanting. And hence it is not only an error in judgment, but an abuse of language, to speak of *His* sorrow as if it were in the same category with that of the contrite and self-accusing penitent.

\* Campbell on the Atonement, p. 138.

Mr Campbell, in a Note appended to his second edition (page 398), endeavours to vindicate his use of the word "repentance" as applied to the confession of the sins of humanity by Jesus Christ.

"That word," he says, "will have its full meaning in the personal experience of every one who accepts in faith the atonement as now represented; for *every such individual sinner will add the excepted element of personal consciousness of sin*. But, if the consciousness of such repentant sinner be analysed, it will be found that all that is morally true and spiritual and acceptable to God in his repentance is an Amen to Christ's condemnation of his sin, and that all the hope towards God, because of which his repentance is free and pure and imbued with the spirit of sonship, is equally traceable to the revelation of the heart of the Father in His acceptance of the Son's confession and intercession on man's behalf."

This attempted explanation, however, is so far from lessening that it greatly increases the difficulty. It supposes a *twofold* interchange or combination of penitential elements as taking place between sinners and their Saviour. On the one hand, that which is lacking in the repentance of sinners, in order to make it "a full response to the righteous judgment of God on the sins of men," is held to be supplied by the "adequate sorrow and contrition with which Christ makes perfect confession of sin on their behalf." On the other hand, that which is lacking in the Saviour's confession of the sins of men, in order to give to it "all the elements of a perfect contrition and repentance on account of them," is held to be supplied by "the personal consciousness of sin on the part of every individual sinner who in faith accepts the atonement."\*. But how can this be? Surely *repentance*, according to any reasonable or scriptural notion we can form of it, is the act or exercise of *one individual person*—namely, of the sinner him-

\* I may here notice in passing, that this latter position is fatal to the notion of a *universal atonement*, for which Mr Campbell so earnestly contends. For, if that "adequate repentance of Christ for human sins," which is held by him to constitute the atonement, *be indebted for one of its most essential elements to the personal experience of believers*, it is evidently *no atonement*, for lack of this "excepted element," to any but "those who accept of it in faith."

self who has done the things repented of. And it seems to me utterly impossible to conceive of it *as a combination of the feelings and dispositions of two or more separate individuals*, whose personal experiences are so fused or blended together that each contributes to it his own *quota* of its essential elements.

Farther, if there can be no such thing as penitence without a personal consciousness of sins, it is (if possible) still more clear, that there can be no personal consciousness of sins, except in the case of one who is actually chargeable with them. Indeed, it is a contradiction in terms to suppose that "a personal consciousness of sins" can be transferred, by sympathy or otherwise, from him by whom the sins have been committed, to another who, though himself sinless, makes confession of them, so as to impart to such confession that penitential character which could not otherwise belong to it. It avails nothing to say that "if the consciousness of the repentant sinner be analysed, it will be found that all that is true and spiritual and acceptable to God in his repentance, is an Amen to Christ's condemnation of his sins." For, his consciousness of sin *does not become Christ's consciousness*, by leading him to acquiesce, however fully, in the feelings with which his sin is regarded by Christ. It is his own personal consciousness of sin, notwithstanding, and is from its very nature incapable of being shared in by One who is Himself absolutely sinless. The sorrow which my sins may have occasioned to an esteemed friend, and the condemnation with which they are visited by him, may doubtless be the means, through Divine grace, of awakening me to a penitential sense of them. Yet, surely, it is not for a moment to be imagined that *my personal sense of guilt*, because he has thus excited it, is to be held *as entering into his consciousness*, so as to give *a penitential character* to his sentiments regarding sins, of which he is entirely guiltless!

We still, therefore, hold ourselves warranted to adhere, notwithstanding Mr Campbell's Note, to our former statement,—namely, that however poignant may have been the



Saviour's sympathetic sorrow for our sins, it cannot, *in the absence of all personal consciousness of them*, be said to have had in it *any* of the elements, far less "*all* the elements, of a perfect contrition and repentance on account of them;" and that it must at all events be held as lacking *that one element*, which is unquestionably of all others the most essential.

(2.) But, not to insist longer on this very obvious and fatal objection to the theory before us, I see not with what justice it can be said that a "confession of our sins, having in it all the elements of a perfect contrition and repentance on account of them," was "*due from the Son of God as in our nature and our true brother.*" That it should have been due from Him on our behalf, *as having become, by the appointment of His Father and by His own voluntary undertaking*, OUR SUBSTITUTE AND SURETY, I might be disposed more readily to admit. And yet even this would seem to imply much more than the imputation of our sins to Him can reasonably be held to include. It would seem to imply that not only the *reatus pœnæ*, or *legal liability to condemnation*, was reckoned to Him; but that the *reatus culpæ*, or *personal blameworthiness* inherent in our sinfulness, was actually transferred to Him.\* But that any such penitential confession of our sins was due from Him *in virtue of His mere assumption of our nature* (and that too, although, when made in all other things like unto His brethren, *He was yet without sin*), appears to me to be irrational in the highest degree. As well might it be said that every individual man, as partaking of the common nature of the human race,—its native depravity and sinfulness not excepted,—is bound to confess and to deplore with deep contrition, not only his own actual transgressions, but the actual transgressions of each and all of his fellow-creatures; and that, too, although, instead of having participated in them, he may have most thoroughly dissented from and protested against them.

(3.) There is still greater difficulty in conceiving how this sympathetic penitence of the Son of God should be regarded as *furnishing an expiation*, and not rather *an aggravation*, of

\* See Note H.



the sins which gave occasion to it. Mr Campbell himself, in the Note already referred to, will not allow that it is in any respect *vicarious*. Indeed, he earnestly disclaims the teaching of any such doctrine as that Christ felt and confessed sin as the substitute for transgressors. But how else can His "perfect contrition and repentance on account of our sins" be considered as an atonement for them? If the idea of *substitution* be altogether set aside, we are evidently thrown back on the requisitions of the divine law, which insist that *the sinner himself* shall perfectly turn from the evil of his own heart and the wickedness of his own way, and not that the righteous shall confess sin and deplore it for him. It may be said, perhaps, that the sorrow of the Saviour on account of our sins *may excite us to repent of them*, so as by repentance to avert from us the merited wrath. But, allowing that it did so ever so thoroughly, *our own repentance would in that case be the atonement*, while the sorrow of Christ would simply be the means of stirring us up to render that atonement.

But this is not all; for, as has been already remarked, the sympathetic penitence of the Son of God may, in some respects, be considered as *aggravating*, rather than as *expiating*, the sins which give occasion to it. To show this, I may refer to the striking instance formerly quoted in illustration of the theory under review—that, namely, of the parent whose health has been undermined by the intensity of his love, grief, and anxiety for a profligate son, who has grievously dishonoured him, and is bringing down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. It is not for a moment to be supposed that the crimes of such a profligate are in any respect alleviated, but rather that they are incomparably increased in guilt, by the anguish endured by his parent at the thought of them. In like manner, if such be the condition of our fallen race, that the Son of God cannot assume the nature of man without having His spirit grievously troubled and agonised by a sympathetic sense of human sins and miseries, we needs must regard the sorrow thus experienced by Him as *aggravating* our transgressions, rather

than atoning for them. And what more dreadful aggravation of the sins of humanity can possibly be imagined, than that the Son of God could not appear in the nature of man—even as that nature was prior to the Fall—without being all His life “a man of sorrows” on account of them, and without having ultimately *His heart broken* by the thought of them, so as to be “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”? Some further element, therefore, than His sympathy must be introduced, in order to speak peace and comfort to our guilty hearts. We must think of Him not only as *identifying Himself with us*, but as graciously undertaking *to substitute Himself for us*—and as doing so, moreover, by the appointment and with the approbation of the Sovereign Judge. And then shall we have good cause to “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.”

(4.) But yet farther, even when we think of the Lord Jesus as substituted for us with the sanction of His heavenly Father, we cannot suppose that His substitution included in it any such thing as subjection in our behalf to what can be properly called “contrition or repentance.” Sin may be imputed to a substitute, to the effect of entailing upon him its legal forfeitures and liabilities, but certainly not to the effect of transferring to him its inherent sinfulness or moral culpability. We well may believe, indeed, that it must have been a source of the most intense mental anguish to the immaculate Saviour to have sin reckoned to Him even as regards its consequences, or to be in any way or to any effect associated, and, as it were, legally or judicially brought into contact with that abominable thing which He supremely hates. But whatever anguish may on this account have been experienced by Him, we cannot with propriety regard it as including *all*, or even as including *any*, of the essential elements of “*contrition and repentance* ;” for such things as “contrition and repentance” are attributable to those only whose own hearts reproach them for their wickedness. And nothing akin to them could have been endured by that Holy One who, amidst all the vicarious sufferings which He bore, had “the unbroken consciousness of

personal separation from those sins" of which the penal consequences were laid upon Him. But if it *were* possible that such things could have been experienced by Him, the question still remains, What are we to think of the procedure of His heavenly Father in sanctioning or appointing them? The substitution of the Saviour in the room of sinners is indeed, in any view that can be taken of it, a profound mystery. But the mystery encompassing it is deepened a thousandfold if God be supposed to have not only visited His immaculate and beloved Son, when standing in our room, with penal consequences for our transgressions, but to have required of Him a penitential confession of them, and a perfect contrition and repentance on account of them, as if in Himself He had been conscious of their ill desert.

(5.) Add to all this, that the theory in question is applicable to our Lord's sufferings only to a limited extent. In so far, indeed, as His sufferings were *personal*, it furnishes no explanation of them whatsoever. Not only might His personal sufferings have been dispensed with, for aught that is required by the exigencies of this hypothesis, but they tend, so far as they go, to lessen our impression of the greatness of those purely sympathetic sorrows, in which all the virtue of His expiation is held to consist. For it cannot be denied that his sympathetic anguish, arising from the thought of those miseries and sins of men with which, when assuming our nature, He became identified, would have been tenfold more affecting if experienced by one who, instead of being himself a "man of sorrows," was invested with all the insignia of personal greatness, and enriched with all the elements of personal happiness and prosperity.

It is a fact, however, which cannot be controverted, that, apart from the endurance of any sympathetic woes with which human sins and miseries may have afflicted Him, the Lord Jesus Christ was subjected, in His own person, to far more than the ordinary amount of sorrow and humiliation which falls to the lot of God's people in this world, and that His lifelong course of ignominy and affliction was terminated by a



shameful and accursed death. "Although He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." "He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "He bore our sins *in His own body on the tree*," instead of merely bearing them in his own spirit by the force of sympathy. "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "He made peace through the blood of His cross." "He was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood." "He was once offered to bear the sins of many." "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." \*

In these and many other statements of Holy Scripture, which might, were it necessary, be multiplied without limit, the sufferings of Christ are evidently represented as sufferings with which in His own person He was afflicted. It is but in a few incidental passages that there is any allusion to His sympathy with us in our miseries and sins, as constituting one of the ingredients in His cup of anguish. Whereas the passages are numberless in which there is broad and explicit allusion made to His personal sufferings, and more particularly to His ignominious death, as having been not merely *incidental* to His gracious mission, but mainly and indispensably conducive to the purposes for which that gracious mission was undertaken by Him.

The question, therefore, still demands a solution as much as ever, How can the sufferings of the Lord Jesus be regarded as pre-eminently exhibiting to us the fatherly love of God? What is there to be seen in them so wonderfully expressive of the loving-kindness which our heavenly Father entertains towards us, as to cast all other manifestations of it into the shade? It

\* 2 Cor. viii. 9 ; Mat. xx. 28 ; Philip. ii. 8 ; 1 Pet. ii. 24 ; Isa. liii. 5 ; 1 Cor. xv. 3 ; Col. i. 20 ; Rev. v. 9 ; Heb. ix. 26, 28.



is easy to give a reply to this question if we take into account the commonly received doctrine of the Atonement. For then the sufferings of Christ are at once seen to be the effectual means of exempting us from penalties which could not otherwise have been averted, and of securing for us blessings which could not otherwise have been obtained. But if this commonly received doctrine be set aside—if it be not admitted that God gave His beloved Son as a substitute and sacrifice for sinful men, that so, without prejudice to the justice of His character, the authority of His law, and the rectitude of His government, they might be redeemed from the merited consequences of their sins, restored to the full enjoyment of His favour, and blessed with the sure hope of inheriting His heavenly kingdom—we are at a loss to discover anything in our Lord's sufferings which should render them pre-eminently declaratory of His Father's love. For then, in whatever way we may endeavour to account for them, they can only be viewed as *incidental* to His heavenly mission, and not as in any way absolutely necessary, or directly conducive to the attainment of the beneficent ends which that mission was designed to accomplish. And accordingly the circumstance of the Son of God being afflicted with them,—not with the view of procuring for us blessings which could not, without such sufferings, have been conferred, but merely in the course of announcing to us blessings which might, without such sufferings, have been proclaimed by Him,—tends rather to obscure than to heighten our conceptions of the love of God in sending His Son into the world.

5. Another attempted explanation of our Lord's sufferings, apart from the commonly received doctrine of the Atonement, on which I have now to offer a few remarks, is that which views them as *the necessary result of the position in which Christ had voluntarily placed Himself, of conflict or collision with the evil that is in the world.*

“Had Jesus Christ,” says a late eloquent preacher, “been simply surprised by the wiles of His adversaries, and dragged struggling and

reluctant to His doom, He would have been a victim, but not a sacrifice. It was His foresight of all the results of His opposition to the world's sin, and His steady and uncompromising battle against it notwithstanding, in every one of its varied forms, knowing that He must be its victim at the last, which elevated His death to the dignity of a sacrifice. It was a true and proper sacrifice—a sacrifice *for sin*—a sacrifice for *the world's sin*."

In so viewing it, however, there are, according to this writer, two things which must be carefully distinguished—namely, the penalties which follow the violation of a law of nature, and the chastisement which ensues upon an act of moral delinquency.

"If," he says, "you approach too near the whirling wheel of steam machinery, the mutilation which follows is the punishment of your temerity. If a traveller ignorantly lays his hand on the cockatrice's den, the throb of the envenomed fang is the punishment of his ignorance. He has broken a law of nature, and must suffer the consequences of the infraction." The case is similar when pain and sorrow are brought upon us, not by our own conduct, but by the faults of others. "In the strictest sense of the word these are punishments—the consequences annexed to transgression. But there is an all-important distinction between them and the chastisement of personal iniquity. For if a man suffer ill-health or poverty as the results of his own misconduct, his conscience forces him to refer this to the wrath of God, and the miseries of conscious fault are added to his penalty."

How, then, did the case stand in this respect with Christ?

It is altogether wrong, we are told, to think of Him "as having endured a mysterious anguish,—the consequence of divine wrath,—the suffering of a heart laden with the conscience of the world's transgressions, and bearing them as if they were His own." "*Christ simply came into collision with the world's evil, and bore the penalty of that daring. He approached the whirling wheel, and was torn in pieces. He laid His hand on the cockatrice's den, and its fangs pierced Him. Such is the law which governs the conflict with evil. It can be crushed only by suffering from it. The Son of Man, who puts His naked foot on the serpent's head, crushes it; but the fang goes into His heel.*"

Further, by way of explaining how Christ may in this way be held to have suffered for the sin *of the world*, we are told, that “sin is a great connected principle,—a single world-spirit,—exactly as the electricity with which the universe is charged is indivisible, so that you cannot separate it from the great ocean of fluid. The electric spark that slumbers in the dewdrop is part of the flood which struck the oak. Separate acts of sin are but manifestations of one great principle. It was thus that the Saviour looked on the sins of His day. The Jews of that age had had no hand in the murder of Abel or Zacharias, but they were of kindred spirit with the men who slew them. Condemning the murderers, they imitated their act. In that imitation they ‘allowed the deeds of their fathers,’—they shared in the guilt of the act, because they had the spirit which led to it.” “Let us possess ourselves of this view of sin, for it is in this way only that we will be able, with any reality of feeling, to enter into the truth, that our sins nailed the Saviour to the cross, or that the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” \*

In making a few remarks on this statement, I shall, as much as possible, confine myself to its bearing on the question immediately before us—viz., How far can the sufferings of Jesus Christ, apart from the expiatory virtues we ascribe to them, be held to have been *indispensably necessary and eminently conducive to our spiritual welfare*, so as in all truth to render His subjection to them—not as regards us, a gratuitous and useless sacrifice,—but an unexampled manifestation of our heavenly Father’s love?

Now it must be evident that the sufferings of our Lord, according to the representation of them here given, cannot by any means be considered as without a parallel. They find their counterpart in those which have been undergone by every zealous reformer and by every devoted martyr, who has set himself in opposition to prevailing error and iniquity, and, with the full foresight that he must ultimately be their victim, has steadily resisted and battled against them notwithstanding. Of all such persons it may, in a measure, be affirmed that they have voluntarily come into collision with the world’s evil, and have borne the inevitable penalty of such a conflict; and also

\* Sermons by the late Rev. F. W. Robertson, 1st series, p. 158-164.



that men of other generations, although having no immediate hand in their afflictions, have shared in the guilt, in so far as they have betrayed the spirit and imitated the deeds of those who persecuted them. It is true, we nowhere find it written in the Word of God, respecting even the most illustrious of self-sacrificing human martyrs or reformers, that "they suffered for our sins,"—that "they gave their life a ransom for many,"—that "they took away sin by the sacrifice of themselves,"—or that "the Lord laid on them the iniquity of us all." I see no reason, however, why some such things might not be written of them, as well as of the Lord Jesus, if the sole ground on which they are applicable to *Him* be that which is set forth in the theory we are now reviewing. And hence the circumstance of their being written of *Him alone* is indicative of some peculiarity in *His* sufferings beyond what this theory is adequate to account for.

It may, doubtless, be said of all, even the very best, of those others who have suffered in their conflict with the world's evil, that they were *mere men*, of like passions with their brethren, subject to errors, infirmities, and besetting sins, and therefore incapable of prosecuting their holy warfare so steadily, so consistently, and so triumphantly as He did, who was not only a perfect and immaculate Man, but the *God-Man*, in whom divinity was itself incarnate. But then, if you thus bring into account the perfection of our Lord's character and the divinity of His nature, with what show of reason can you venture to affirm *that His own sufferings, when contending against the world's evil, were inevitable?* Surely, in the case of one who combined in His adorable person the omnipotence of divinity with the perfection of humanity, it cannot be reasonably maintained that there was any "*temerity*" displayed, or *any personal suffering necessarily incurred*, by collision even with the most threatening forms of earthly evil.

And here, in passing, I must not omit to notice the singular looseness of the analogy that is drawn between our Lord's contention against the power of evil, and the vain attempt of any of God's creatures to resist the operation of the fixed laws of



the universe. Surely "*the whirling wheel*" which Christ "*approached too nearly*," so as to be "*torn in pieces as the penalty of such daring*," cannot, with any propriety, be compared to one of God's laws, "*moving on its majestic course irresistible*," insomuch that, "*if you oppose the law in its eternal march, the universe crushes you,—that is all!*" \* With much greater justice might *the evil which our Lord resisted* be itself described as a daring attempt, on the part of God's rebellious creatures, to set at defiance those principles of His moral government which are no less immutable than any laws of the physical universe.

Again, when this writer speaks of "a law governing the conflict with evil, that it can be crushed only by suffering from it," the question is forced on us, Whence this law? Is it a mere blind fatality? Or is it the arbitrary appointment of a sovereign ruler? Or if it be neither of these, must we not seek after some wise, just, and holy reasons for it, in the character of God and the principles of His government,—reasons somewhat akin to those which we allege when vindicating the necessity of an atonement?

But, not to insist on this, it cannot be with truth affirmed, in the case of the all-perfect and all-powerful Son of God, that, apart from the expiatory purpose of His mediation, He needs must have suffered when contending against the power of sin. *Ordinarily* it may be "the law which governs the conflict with evil, that it can be crushed only by suffering from it." It is no *ordinary* conflict with evil, however, that we have now to deal with, but one that is in the highest degree *extraordinary*, being, in point of fact, altogether *supernatural*. We are not entitled, therefore, to judge of it by natural laws. The person who maintained this conflict was the Son of God, in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And though He became incarnate in the fashion of a man, yet was He not thereby divested of His higher attributes; while, even as regards the human nature which He assumed, He was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin mother, and was

\* Sermons by the late Rev. F. W. Robertson, 1st series, p. 163.

“sanctified and anointed by the Holy Spirit above measure.” Such being the case, it seems to me unwarranted, and I may almost venture to say extravagant, to represent this immaculate and divine Redeemer as subject, like frail and fallen mortals, to an incapacity of overcoming the world’s evil without Himself suffering from it.

Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ is as far as possible from acknowledging any such incapacity as lying upon Him. He does, indeed, speak of His sufferings as necessary to the work He had undertaken to perform. But, in doing so, He evidently has respect to that expiation of human guilt which they were designed to accomplish. And so far is He from regarding those evil agencies, with which He was necessarily brought into collision, as having any power to harm Him in the conflict, that, on the contrary, He asserts in the broadest terms their utter impotency and nothingness as opposed to Him. Thus, on one occasion, when looking forward to His great sacrifice, He says, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”\* Again, when Simon Peter drew the sword and smote one of those who had come to seize his Master, Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”† “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”‡ And yet again, when Pilate said to Him, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” Jesus calmly replied, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.”§ The truth is, that both our Lord himself and His apostles, when speaking of the necessity of His sufferings, have reference, not

\* John x. 17, 18.

† Mat. xxvi. 53, 54.

‡ John xviii. 11.

§ John xix. 10, 11.

to the power of any subordinate agencies which may have been instrumental in the infliction of them, but to God's gracious purpose of salvation for perishing sinners through the substitution of His only-begotten Son, to the accomplishment of which, as typified in the ancient law, and foretold by the ancient prophets, His sufferings were indispensable. And if this gracious purpose be ignored or set aside, there is nothing in His mere conflict with the world's evil that can be considered as rendering these sufferings so essential to His heavenly mission, that any substantial good accruing to us from that mission, and consequently any manifestation displayed by it of the love of God, must be traced to His endurance of them.

But this is not all. For even were it admitted that the sufferings of our Lord were the necessary result of the position which He assumed, according to the divine appointment, of conflict or collision with the evil that is in the world, the question lies behind, *Wherein is this conflict*, which at so great a cost of suffering He underwent, *pre-eminently conducive to our advantage*, so as to display towards us a love that passeth knowledge? We look in vain to the author above referred to for any definite answer to this inquiry. His statements in regard to it are of the vaguest possible kind. He represents Christ as "opposing the world's sin,"—as maintaining "a steady, uncompromising battle against it,"—and as "crushing the world's evil by suffering from it." But, to *what effect* did Christ do these things? What substantial good do we gain by His having done them? Did He *so* "oppose and battle against the world's sin," as to *exempt us* from the necessity of a like arduous and painful conflict? Did He *so* "crush the world's evil" as to render it *innocuous to us*, or *less hurtful to us*, when contending against it, than it would otherwise have been? In short, is His contest with evil so inestimably beneficial to us, that we should view it, and the sufferings attendant on it, as transcending all other manifestations of the love of God? To these questions the author of this theory does not reply. He makes no attempt to show how it comes to pass that this self-immolating conflict of the Lord Jesus should



have *greatly contributed to our benefit*, as sinful creatures, above every other provision of divine love. Indeed, the only connection which he speaks of *us* as having with it is one that is altogether the reverse of beneficial—namely, our participation in the sinful spirit, and our consequent implication in the evil deeds, of those malignant men by whom the Son of God was persecuted! “For it is only,” he says, “by keeping *this* in view, that we can enter with any reality of feeling into the truth, that our sins nailed the Saviour to the cross, and that the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” So, then, according to this writer, the great concern which *we*, as sinful creatures, have in the Redeemer’s sufferings is, not that they secure for us pardon and acceptance with God, but that they bring into fuller light the turpitude and heinousness of our transgressions, in so far as we recognise in these the operation of the same evil principle which crucified the Lord of Glory!

Where, then, we again ask, is the great benefit accruing to us from the sufferings of the Saviour when contending against the world’s evil, by reason of which His subjection to these sufferings may be viewed as an unparalleled manifestation of the love of God? The benefit is obvious, if He suffered as our substitute, and thereby secured for us exemption from the penalties of sin, and grace at the same time to purify us from its moral pollution. But, if His sufferings be not the appointed means by which pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace are obtained for such as put their trust in Him,—if they be regarded only as the necessary result of His own personal contest with the evil agencies that were opposed to Him,—if they have not *so* “crushed the world’s evil” as in some effectual way to rescue or redeem us from it,—then I am unable to see any such inestimable good to men of all nations and of all ages arising from them as can justify the scriptural representations given of them, as of all tokens of divine love incomparably the most wonderful.

Evidently it seems to be only in the way of *example* that our Lord’s sufferings, when regarded in this light, can be of any advantage to us whatsoever. Nor is the advantage which



may be derived from them in the way of example to be so highly estimated as some are inclined to think. For *of what* really are they, when thus considered, an example? Not merely are they an example of remarkable firmness, patience, and devotedness in contending against the power of evil, but at the same time *of the incapacity of these qualities, even when displayed in the highest measure of excellence, to save us from the endurance of the bitterest anguish in such a contest.* Indeed, the paramount excellence claimed for them, is that of furnishing the most striking instance that ever was exhibited to the world, of the alleged "law which governs the conflict with evil—namely, that it can be crushed only by suffering from it." And hence they cannot be considered as supplying us with any very notable encouragement to earnestness and perseverance in our Christian warfare. For if even the immaculate Jesus—the only-begotten Son of God—must needs, when engaging in such a conflict, be subjected to humiliations the most abasing and sufferings the most excruciating,—we have cause to fear that ordinary men may find in His example *quite as much to daunt and check as to encourage them*; and that they may so read the history of His afflictions as to learn from it that their best policy is *to refrain from all contact* with "the cockatrice by whose envenomed fang He was so sorely pierced," and *from all collision* with "the whirling wheel, by approaching which too nearly He was torn in pieces."

On the whole, then, it does not appear that our Lord's sufferings, when considered as resulting from His conflict with the world's evil, were either so indispensably necessary to the accomplishment of the work assigned to Him, or so superlatively conducive to our advantage, as to verify the strong statements of Scripture, when it speaks of them as pre-eminently declaring and commending to us the love of God.

## LECTURE V.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE ATONEMENT.

*(Continued.)*

6. IN connection with those unsatisfactory attempts to account for the sufferings and death of the Redeemer, which have been discussed in the preceding Lectures, it seems proper to make a few remarks on some of the leading views advocated by the author of a recently published treatise entitled 'The Life and Light of Men.'

(1.) This writer substantially agrees with one already referred to, in tracing our Lord's sufferings to those evil influences with which, in His divine mission, He was brought into collision.

"It was a necessity," he says, "in Jesus Christ to be faithful to Himself, to God, and to man, without regard to consequences, or to the prejudices, wishes, or judgments of people, rulers, or priests. Being what He was, Christ's death in that age and nation was inevitable; and He knew that it was." "With His eyes open, of His own free will and purpose, He encountered the agony, the terror, and the shame of crucifixion." "His death was the act of men—wholly and solely the act of men; and the actors were governed not by an invincible decree of God, and not by a resistless Satanic influence, but simply by their own views of the character of their victim—by what they imagined was demanded for the safety of their religion and their country—and by strong feelings of revenge and malice." "Without question, Jesus fell a sacrifice to jealousy and

rage ; and without question, the offerers of the sacrifice—the only offerers—were the Jews.” \*

Now, it may be that the sufferings of our Lord, in so far as regards *the human agency* concerned in them, were the *natural* (though, as we have already endeavoured to show, by no means the “*inevitable*”) result of His steadfast opposition to prevailing sins and prejudices. And it may be further admitted, that His adversaries, when afflicting Him, were not overborne by any extraneous influence, to the effect of subverting the freedom of their will, or of lessening in any degree their moral responsibility.

But what is to be said of *God’s agency* in the matter ? This is the main question with which we have to deal. For no discerning reader of the Scriptures can have failed to remark, that the sufferings of Christ are there usually spoken of in reference, not so much to the human actors who inflicted them, as to the divine purposes for which they were appointed.

Now, to this question Dr Young, as appears to me, has failed to give a satisfactory answer.

“ Our Lord’s betrayal, capture, and murder,” he says, “ like all the guilty outbreaks of the human will, however opposed to truth and right and God, were not left out in the vast system of Providence, but distinctly reckoned and provided against, as wisdom and love should ordain. Hence wrote the prophet, long before Messiah’s advent, ‘ It pleased the Lord to bruise Him ; He hath put Him to grief.’ That which comes out in God’s providence is often in Scripture so put as if it were the direct doing of God, though most manifestly it neither is nor can be. Thus it is said, ‘ The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart,’ when all that God did had a manifest tendency to subdue and reclaim, rather than to harden. But because the actual effect was to render the king of Egypt more obdurate than before, that effect is ascribed, though it can be so only in the most secondary and indirect sense, to the divine agency.” †

I cannot admit the justice of thus placing our Lord’s sufferings, in so far as regards the divine agency concerned in them, on the same footing with “ all the guilty outbreaks of the

\* ‘ The Life and Light of Men,’ by John Young, LL.D., p. 286-291.

† Ibid., p. 287, 288.

human will," which, "however much opposed to God," "come out in His providence," and are overruled and "provided against, as wisdom and love ordain."

It may be questioned, indeed, whether even the "hardening of Pharaoh's heart" can properly be so regarded. For though we are not to suppose that God exercised on the heart of the Egyptian monarch any hurtful influence, which had a direct and natural tendency to render him more obdurate,—yet God certainly knew that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart would be "the actual effect" of those divine dealings with him, which, had he been of a better spirit, were in themselves fitted to "subdue and reclaim him;" and what is more, God fully contemplated and intended that this "actual effect" of His dealings with Pharaoh should be brought to pass, inasmuch as He said to him, "For this cause in very deed have I raised thee up, to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."\*

But, however it may have been in this respect with Pharaoh's obduracy, it cannot be with any justice said of our Lord's sufferings, that they merely "came out in the providence of God," as things which, "however much opposed to Him," He nevertheless permitted to take place, while He "reckoned and provided against them, as wisdom and love should ordain." For it is the clear and explicit doctrine of Holy Scripture, that the sufferings of Christ *were express matter of divine appointment, as of themselves constituting the most prominent and important part of the great work which His Father had given Him to do.* God did not so much "provide against them," as provide *for* them,—foretelling them in the predictions of His prophets,—prefiguring them in the sacrifices of His ancient Church,—and so ordering all events and circumstances in the world's history—not excepting the prejudices and passions of wicked men—as in the fulness of time to lead to their accomplishment. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, thus spake of the Great Sufferer, "*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have*

\* Exod. ix. 16.



taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”\* The whole company of the apostles on a subsequent occasion, “lifted up their voice to God with one accord,” saying, “Of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, *for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.*”† Christ himself spake of the woes endured by Him as “things which He ought to suffer,” or “things which it behoved Him to suffer,” in order that the great ends of His mission might be fulfilled—as “a cup which His Father had given Him to drink,” and a “baptism which He had to be baptised with.”‡ And the truth is, that we rarely find in the Scriptures any very special allusion to the human instrumentality employed in our Lord’s afflictions, as compared with the frequency of the references that are expressly made to the part which God had in designing and appointing them.

Nor is this all. For the Scriptures, while assuring us that the sufferings of Christ were thus matter of divine appointment, have no less unequivocally declared to us the gracious purpose of *expiating the sins of men*, to which, in the counsels of God, they were meant to be subservient. Thus, while in the prophetic passage quoted by Dr Young, we read that “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him,—He hath put Him to grief,”—we find in the adjoining verses such statements as the following: “Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin;” “For the transgression of my people was He stricken;” “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;” “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed;” “By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.”§ And frequently in the New Testament we meet with the like assurances; as, for example, that “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree;” that “He once suffered for sins, the

\* Acts ii. 23.

† Acts iv. 24, 27, 28.

‡ Luke xxiv. 26, 46; John xviii. 2; Luke xii. 50.

§ Isa. liii. 5-11.

just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God ;” that “ His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins ;” that “ Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ;” that “ Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ;” that “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ;” that “ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ;” that “ God hath set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins ;” and that “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” \*

In the face of these and suchlike explicit statements, which are of the most frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, it is really astonishing that Dr Young, when speaking of the “ alleged divine appointment of Jesus to take the place of sinners, and suffer the penalty of their crimes, and thus set them free,” should hazard such assertions as the following :— “ If we demand proof of this divine ordination, *not a shred of proof can be produced ;* ” “ we look in vain for such a revelation, or anything in the least approaching it. There may be texts in the Old Testament *which it is possible so to interpret that they shall not be wholly subversive of the notion of a divine decree of substitution and vicarious punishment, but there is not a single text of Scripture, in which this doctrine, or anything approaching to it, is directly expressed, or in which even it is natural, far less necessary, to presuppose it.*” † I hold, on the contrary, and have already endeavoured to show, that of this doctrine we are able to produce the most conclusive proof; and that there are many passages, both of the Old and New Testament, in which it is so “ directly expressed,” or so “ naturally and even necessarily supposed,” that no other interpretation can be put upon them that is not “ wholly subversive ” of their evident meaning.

\* 1 Peter ii. 24, iii. 18 ; Mat. xxvi. 28 ; Heb. ix. 26, 28 ; Gal. iii. 13 ; Eph. i. 7 ; Col. i. 14 ; Rom. iii. 25 ; 1 John iv. 10.

† Young’s ‘ Life and Light of Men,’ p. 300, 301.

We are told, however, that the death of Jesus Christ cannot be regarded as a vicarious sin-offering, because the Jews, to whose jealousy and rage He fell a victim, had no intention to offer such a sacrifice. "Was it ever heard of," we are asked, "that an expiatory sacrifice was offered up to God without the consent of the offerer, and even without his knowledge? The Jews sacrificed Christ—sacrificed Him to their vile passions; but as certainly they did not mean to atone for their sins, or to render satisfaction to divine justice." \*

To this we need only reply, that what we are concerned with is, not the *intention of the Jews* when they brought about the Saviour's death, but *the intention of God* when in His determinate counsel He appointed it. It not unfrequently happens—as in the case of the treatment of Joseph by his brethren—that what men intend for evil, God means for good. It is written of Him, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee, the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain;" and, "There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." †

Again, it is objected, that "Christ was not selected by men to live and act in their name; the generations of men were never consulted on the subject, and certainly never signified their concurrence in such a selection." ‡ But there is just as little force in this objection; for whatever view may be taken of the end to be served by our Lord's sufferings, it is certain that God was the prime mover in the appointment of them. And why should it be thought necessary that the consent of men must be first obtained before God can give up His Son for their salvation, whether in the way of vicarious sacrifice or otherwise? Surely it is enough if the consent of sinners be obtained before this unspeakable gift becomes actually effectual to their salvation. And *this* is expressly provided for in the Gospel. For the substitution of Christ does not become effectual or actually beneficial to any individual sinner, until that

\* Young's 'Life and Light of Men,' p. 292, 293.

† Gen. i. 20; Psalm lxxvi. 10; Prov. xix. 21.

‡ Young's 'Life and Light of Men,' p. 300.



sinner, by an appropriating faith, "receives and rests upon Him for salvation," or, in other words, consents to take Him as his substitute.

(2.) Another of the leading doctrines laid down by this writer is, that the work of redemption is wholly *subjective*—its sole and entire aim being the moral transformation of the sinner, or the rooting-out of sin from the human soul. Indeed, he holds that no such thing is possible as a remission of the guilt and penal consequences of sin, except through the previous extirpation of sin itself.

Speaking of "spiritual laws," he observes that "they do not need or admit of vindication or support from human or divine hands. Without aid from any quarter they avenge themselves, and exact without fail, so long as the evil remains, the amount of penalty to the veriest jot and tittle which the deed of violation deserves. Essentially and perfectly wise and right, they are irresistible, in the case of the obedient and the rebellious alike. . . . Spiritual laws are self-acting; with all their penalties and sanctions, they are immediately self-acting, and without the remotest possibility of failure or mistake. Sin is death—holiness is life; these brief sentences are a condensation of the code of the spiritual universe." \* "In the very act, in the very moment of evil, the real penalty descends irresistibly, and in the very amount which is deserved. The sin insures, because it *is*, its own punishment." † "God himself could not annul the sequence, sin and death; could not dissolve this dire connection; could not shield from the penalty, except by removing its cause. There is only one way in which the tremendous doom of the sinful soul can be escaped, in consistency with the great laws of the spiritual universe. . . . If sin were extirpated, and if the love of God and of good were planted in its stead, then the true redemption of the human spirit would be secure. There is one salvation for man—only one; a salvation not from hell, but from sin; not from consequences here or hereafter, but from the deep cause itself." ‡ "The punishment of moral evil, always and everywhere, is certain. The justice of the universe, in this sense, is an eternal fact, which even God could not set aside. There is an irresistible, a real force, springing out of the essential constitution of things, whereby sin

\* Young's 'Life and Light of Men,' p. 87, 88.

† Ibid., p. 90.

‡ Ibid., p. 100.



punishes itself. God's merey in Christ does not in the slightest degree set aside this justice. What it does is, to remove and render non-existent the only ground on which the claim of justice stands. Instead of arbitrarily withdrawing the criminal from punishment, it destroys in his soul that evil which is the only cause and reason of punishment, and which being removed, punishment ceases of itself." \*

The limits of this lecture necessarily restrict us to a few observations on these remarkable statements:—

(a.) Without questioning that in the constitution of man, and in the course of Providence, there is an order of sequences, or a system of "laws," observable, tending to secure a kind of *natural retribution*, we demur to the representation given of these "spiritual laws," as "immediately self-acting, without the remotest possibility of failure or mistake," and as "irresistible alike in the case of the obedient and the rebellious, so that "punishment or reward dispenses itself at once, and in the amount in which either is merited." For, to say nothing of Scripture, it is the plain dictate of experience, that there is no such uniform, unfailing, and adequate dispensation of rewards and punishments in the present life, but that, on the contrary, the anomalies and exceptional cases are so great and so numerous, as to furnish strong presumptive evidence of a future and more perfect retribution in the life to come.

(b.) The statements of this writer are farther objectionable, as apparently setting aside the moral government of God. He speaks of the "laws of the spiritual universe," by which sin and its bitter fruits are inseparably connected. But what of *God's moral law*, imperatively requiring obedience, through the dictates of conscience, and the express precepts of His Word, and authoritatively denouncing condemnation, either here or hereafter, on its transgressors? He speaks, too, of these "spiritual laws" as "*self-acting*," so as *neither to need nor to admit of support or vindication from human or divine hands.*" And when explaining in what sense the human emotion of *anger* may be attributed to the Almighty, he affirms

\* Young's 'Life and Light of Men,' p. 115, 116.

that one of its human elements—namely, “the desire, leading to effort, to put down sin—is rendered needless by the ordained course of the universe, inasmuch as spiritual law necessitates the instant punishment of sin.” \*

What place, it may well be asked, is left by this theory for the moral government of the living personal God? The Judge of all the earth, who will certainly do right, and has pledged Himself to render to men according to their works, is superseded, it seems, by “the justice of the universe.” As a legislator and ruler, the great God has nothing to do. He has simply to look on, and see the operation of that “self-acting” mechanism, which is independent of His support, and does not allow of His interference! †

(c.) Farther, while admitting that the salvation of a sinner would be incomplete without “the extirpation of sin from his soul,” we hold that it would be equally incomplete without deliverance from the *guilt* of sin; that is to say, from its forfeiture of the divine favour, and its liability to the divine wrath and condemnation. This latter element of salvation is not to be confounded with the former. They are indeed *inseparable* in the provisions of the Gospel, but they are not to be regarded as *identical*. Sin is not only a spiritual *disease* which needs to be cured, but a *crime* which the great Judge must either condemn or pardon. For, not to speak of the testimony of Scripture, which (as might be easily shown did our limits permit) is altogether conclusive upon this point, there is an irrepressible sense of guilt in the human heart, bearing sure witness to the condemnation which past sin has incurred, and which future reformation cannot of itself annul.

It may be said, indeed, that no pardon which God may confer will arrest the operation of those “laws of the spiritual universe whereby sin inevitably punishes itself.” But is it not equally true that the *natural retribution* inflicted by these “spiritual laws” is not to be stayed by repentance and amendment? The repentance of the debauchee does not repair his

\* Young’s ‘Life and Light of Men,’ p. 151.

† See Note I.

shattered health; the repentance of the prodigal does not retrieve his ruined fortunes; nor, in the case of awakened sinners, is it ordinarily found that repentance and amendment are of themselves sufficient, without some satisfactory assurance of the divine forgiveness, to silence the reproofs of conscience, to allay the oppressive sense of guilt, and to drive away the terrors of a coming judgment.

Even were the case otherwise, what would God be doing, when, by an extraordinary interposition, He “destroys in the soul that evil which is the only cause and reason of punishment, and which being removed, punishment ceases of itself”? Would He not be (indirectly, indeed, but not the less effectually on that account) “setting aside the justice of the universe,” and “withdrawing the criminal from punishment”—from the only punishment which, according to Dr Young’s theory, is provided for him? And if so, the question remains, Can God, as a just and holy Lawgiver and Moral Governor, be expected to do so, without some adequate satisfaction or atonement?

The truth is, however, that, as moral and accountable agents, it is not with “self-acting laws of the spiritual universe,” but with the living personal God—the righteous Judge and Ruler of the universe—that we have to do. The testimony of His Word, and the dictates of our own moral nature, assure us that by sin we are excluded from His favour, and justly exposed to the endurance of His wrath. And hence no method of salvation can avail us which does not provide for the cancelling of our guilt, as well as for the removal of our sinfulness.

(3.) Without dwelling longer on this topic, we now come to the consideration of another question more closely bearing on the subject of the preceding Lectures—namely, How is it, according to Dr Young’s theory, that the sufferings of Christ are conducive to that “extinction of sin in the soul” which he holds to be “the true and only redemption”?

His answer is, that the sufferings of our Lord secure the accomplishment of this great moral end, simply as being *a*



*manifestation of divine self-sacrificing love*, by which the sinful heart is captivated, its evil inclinations are subdued, and “the love of God and of good are implanted in it.”

“The carnal will,” he says, “was proof against mere law or authority, and trampled it under foot. The voice of command, even though it were God’s, was powerless, and the flesh proudly triumphed over it. But the voice of love is omnipotent. Incarnate, crucified love overmasters sin in the flesh—condemns it, dooms it to death, kills it outright. The first stroke of this divine weapon is mortal, and the final victory, though won by slow degrees, is infallibly certain.” \* “The divinest work of God on this earth is the destroying of evil. By the one true sacrifice of Christ—an act of divine self-sacrifice—He aims a blow at the root of evil within man’s heart. The subsequent process is endlessly diverse, and is tedious and slow, but the issue is certain—the death of sin. God touches the deadly disease at its foul source and heals it. He breaks the hard heart by the overwhelming pressure of pure, almighty mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ. He kindles a new divine life, which is holiness—the resolute, free, glad choice of truth and of good.” † “From the beginning, and through many agencies and influences, mercy has wondrously interposed, not to defraud justice, but to destroy sin, which is death, and to create holiness, which is life. At last, by one amazing intervention, God’s uttermost was put forth to secure the double effect by love, whose breadth and length, and depth and height, no mind can compass.” ‡ “The sacrifice of Christ was not required to appease God’s anger, or to satisfy His justice. . . . It was wholly and solely made by God for men and for sin, in order that sin might be for ever put down, and rooted out of human nature. This stupendous act of divine sacrifice was God’s instrument of reconciliation and redemption—God’s method of conquering the human heart, and of subduing a revolted world and attaching it to His throne—pure love, self-sacrificing love, crucified, dying love.” §

It will be observed that in these and the like statements, which frequently occur in the treatise of this writer, there is no recognition of *the grace of the Holy Spirit* “shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,” as necessary to

\* Young’s ‘Life and Light of Men,’ p. 74.

† Ibid., p. 101.

‡ Ibid., p. 124.

§ Ibid., p. 313.



the moral renovation of the sinful heart—a doctrine which is held, as the writer must have known, by all orthodox believers in the Atonement, and which, accordingly, he was not warranted, when contending against them, to set aside, without fully and fairly meeting the scriptural grounds on which it rests. Now, I need scarcely remark that, if this doctrine be well founded, it is of itself sufficient to show that the Saviour's mediation was intended, not merely to manifest to sinners the love of God, but at the same time *to procure from God for behoof of sinners that grace* without which no display of divine love would produce any salutary and sanctifying impression upon them.

But, even without pressing this weighty consideration, there are other grounds, fully set forth in the preceding Lectures, on which the *merely subjective* or *moral view* of the Atonement appears to be altogether indefensible. It is easy to declaim on the power of “divine love, self-sacrificing love, crucified, dying love,” to “overmaster sin, to conquer the human heart, to subdue a revolted world, and attach it to the throne of God.” But wherein are the sufferings of Christ expressive of such a love, apart from the expiatory virtues we ascribe to them? If they were not the necessary means of delivering us from penalties and forfeitures not otherwise to be averted, and of procuring for us substantial and important benefits not otherwise to be obtained, it does not appear that we are so infinitely beholden to them that our sins should be mortified, our selfish inclinations subdued, and our whole souls overpowered and captivated by the contemplation of them.

The author refers us to some “marvellous instances of self-sacrifice for others, furnished by human nature, as aiding us to conceive the higher divine mystery.” The mother, for example, who watches day and night by the bed of her child smitten with a deadly plague, and who lives only so long as to see the child restored, and then catches the mortal infection and dies; the youth who plunges into the deep to save a drowning brother, and who, after incredible exertions, reaches him—seizes him—is able only to hold him up till other help

arrives, and then himself sinks and perishes; and the physician going deliberately into a room where lies a dead body which contains the secret of some unknown and terrific disease—opening the body—discovering the seat and nature of the malady—writing down what he had discovered, so as to be the means of saving life to the community, and then laying himself down to die;—these are appealed to as “known examples of vicarious suffering, glowing flashes of love from heaven in a dark and cold world,”—and as indicating that “there must be an eternal Sun of love, out from which they are scattered and imperfect radiations.” \*

Now, I might take exception to these instances, on the ground that the sufferings and death endured in them were merely *incidental* to those loving exertions in the course of which they were encountered, and were not, in themselves considered, directly instrumental in bringing about the beneficent result of these exertions. The watchfulness of the mother, the efforts of the youth, and the researches of the physician, would not have been the less advantageous to those who were benefited by them, although they had not been eventually attended with any such fatal consequences to the parties themselves. Whereas, on the other hand, the sufferings and death of Jesus are represented in Holy Scripture not as incidental merely, but as essential to His divine mission, and as themselves constituting the most prominent and important part of that beneficent work which His Father had given Him to accomplish.

But not to insist on this defect in the alleged parallels, it is evident that, in one and all of them, there are *substantial objective benefits* to which the self-sacrificing efforts are conducive, by reason of which the *loving character* of these efforts is palpably clear and strikingly impressive, so soon as our minds are turned to the contemplation of them. The affection of the mother is shown by promoting the recovery of her child; the love of the youth by rescuing his drowning brother; and the philanthropy of the physician by his discovery of the

\* Young's ‘Life and Light of Men,’ p. 310, 311.

seat and nature of the mysterious disease for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. But where, I again ask, are there any such indications of captivating and constraining love in the sufferings of the Son of God, according to the *merely subjective view* of the purpose to which they were meant to be subservient?

The truth is, that whatever amount of *self-sacrifice* may be displayed by the sufferings and death of Christ, they furnish no evidence of "self-sacrificing LOVE," which can, to the extent alleged, be morally influential, *except in so far as we derive from them some substantial good, the priceless worth of which we are capable of appreciating.* Now, *the good* which, according to Dr Young, accrues from them, is the slaying of sin, the overcoming of self, the entire subjugation of our own will to the will of God. And *this*, though unquestionably a benefit of the highest value, is not one which the carnal mind can so fully appreciate *as to see in the sufferings of Christ, simply because they tend to it, a captivating and soul-subduing manifestation of divine love.* Most men, as I have already remarked, cannot without much difficulty be brought to regard it as a benefit at all. And to have its matchless excellence and preciousness not only discerned and acknowledged by the understanding, but deeply and fixedly impressed upon the heart, is, I venture to say, a very rare attainment, which only the most spiritual and godly men can be expected to reach—an attainment *which, instead of preceding and mightily conducing to the sanctification of the sinner, is only to be reached when his sanctification has been well advanced*—an attainment, moreover, which no sinner will ever reach without those sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit which find no place in the theory under discussion.\*

It is no fair retort to say, that even according to the commonly-received view of the Redeemer's sufferings, the agency of the Holy Spirit is necessary to a full appreciation of the love which they display, and an actual experience of the

\* Christ's self-sacrifice, we are told, manifests divine love, because it sanctifies us. And it sanctifies us by manifesting divine love. Surely there is here a "vicious circle"?



sanctifying power exerted by them ; for *our* doctrine does not require us to maintain, but rather very earnestly to controvert, the *subjective efficacy* of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, *apart from the objective benefits procured by it*. And of these *objective benefits*, one of the most important is *the grace of the Holy Spirit* which the Saviour's death has purchased for us, according to that statement of the apostle, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through (the) faith.*"\*

Nor must it be thought that we underrate the vast importance of that moral power with which the death of Christ is fraught, because we deny the *exclusively subjective* character of the salvation which it is intended to accomplish. On the contrary, we regard it as one of the prime excellencies of the Evangelical method of redemption, that it provides no less effectually for the purification of our souls than for the pardon of our transgressions. Indeed, we hold it to be, so far as men are concerned, the very climax or consummation of their Saviour's work, "to purify them unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," and in the end "to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."† And the chief ground on which we are disposed very earnestly to contend against any *merely subjective view* of the Atonement is, that by such a view *it is robbed of all its moral power*, and made no longer to be that heart-constraining manifestation of the fatherly love of God, and as such, that mighty agency of sanctification, which it has ever proved to be when held forth in its true character as a vicarious expiation and satisfaction for the sins of the world.

7. I deem it unnecessary to supplement these remarks by dwelling at any length on the theory of Dr Bushnell, as another recent attempt to account for our Lord's sufferings apart from the commonly-received doctrine of the Atonement.

\* Gal. iii. 13, 14.

† Titus ii. 14 ; Jude 24.



(1.) There are just two positions in the treatise of this eloquent writer which have any special bearing on the main subject of our present Lectures. One of these, in which he substantially agrees with Dr Young, is, that the salvation which Christ has accomplished is wholly *subjective*—His aim having been, “at the expense of great suffering, and even of death itself, to bring us *out of our sins themselves*, and so out of their penalties.” \*

In regard to this position I need only now remark, in addition to the observations already made upon it, that it does not accord with the plain statements of Holy Scripture. There can be no doubt that our deliverance “from our sins themselves” was one of the great ends of the Saviour’s mediation. But that it was the *sole*, or even the more immediate, purpose for which He endured His great sufferings, is an assertion which cannot by any means be reconciled with such express scriptural statements as the following—that “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities”—that “He gave His life a ransom for many”—that “His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins”—that we are “justified by His blood”—that “in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”—and that “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” †

Nay, we may venture to say of this part of the theory, that

\* Bushnell on ‘Vicarious Sacrifice,’ p. 6.

† Isa. liii. 5; Mat. xx. 28, xxvi. 28; Eph. i. 7; Gal. iii. 13. On the last of these texts Dr Bushnell remarks (p. 120): “Probably the expression ‘being made a curse for us,’ does imply that He somehow came under the retributive consequences of sin—in what manner will hereafter be explained.” And afterwards (p. 422), when giving the promised explanation, he says, “The meaning of the expression is exhausted, when Christ is conceived simply to come into the corporate state of evil, and to *bear it with us*—faithful unto death for our recovery.” I need scarcely observe that this is not *explaining* the clause, but *explaining it away*. “Bear it *with us*” is what Paul must be made to say, in order to satisfy the exigencies of Dr Bushnell’s theory. But what Paul *does* say is, not “*with us*,” but “*for us*.” It is somewhat unfortunate for this and for similar theories, that the *former* of these expressions should be constantly avoided, while the *latter* is habitually used, by the inspired writers.

it is the *very reverse* of the scriptural doctrine. For, so far is it from having been the Saviour's purpose to bring us first of all "out of our sins themselves," with a view to our being thereby liberated from their penalties—that, on the contrary, His aim was, in the first place, to save us from the penalties of our transgressions, in order to our ultimate deliverance from the sins themselves. Thus, it is written, that "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, *that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness*"—that "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, *and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*"—that "the blood of Jesus, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot unto God, shall purge your conscience from dead works *to serve the living God*,"—and that "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, and *that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*"\* In these and such-like passages we are plainly taught that, while it is *the more immediate purpose* of the Saviour (according to the no less explicit import of other passages) to redeem us from the guilt and penal consequences of our transgressions, *His ultimate design is to deliver us from sin itself*, and finally "to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

In full accordance with the position thus assigned to sanctification as the grand and final result to which the Saviour's work of redeeming grace, in so far as regards the subjects of it, is conducive, we find that His cross has a moral power ascribed to it—far beyond aught that other motives are possessed of—to captivate the heart, to subdue its evil desires, and to bind it in loving and willing homage to the service of God. But we have already shown that any such moral power in the cross of Christ is necessarily dependent on those *substantial objective benefits* which it procures for us—and that, apart from these objective benefits, it is no longer felt to be

\* 1 Peter ii. 24; Titus ii. 14; Heb. ix. 14; Eph. v. 25-27.

that unexampled manifestation of divine love, and, as such, that mighty agency of sanctification, which it has ever proved to be when viewed in its true character as a propitiation and satisfaction for human guilt.

(2.) The other part of the theory of Dr Bushnell to which I referred is very much akin to the views of Mr Campbell.

“We are not to hold,” he says, “the Scripture terms of *vicarious sacrifice* as importing a literal substitution of places, by which Christ became a sinner for sinners, as penally subject to our deserved penalties. Christ, in what is called His vicarious sacrifice, simply engages, at the expense of great suffering, and even of death itself, to bring us out of our sins themselves, and so out of their penalties; *being Himself profoundly identified with us in our fallen estate, and burdened in feeling with our evils.*” \* “Love is a vicarious principle, bound by its own nature itself to take upon its feeling and care and sympathy those who are down under evil and its penalties. Thus it is that Jesus takes our nature upon Him, to be made a curse for us, and to bear our sins. Holding such views of vicarious sacrifice, we must find it belonging to the essential nature of all holy virtue. We are also required to go forward and show how it pertains to all other good beings as truly as to Christ himself in the flesh; how the Eternal Father before Christ, and the Holy Spirit coming after, and the good angels before and after, all alike have borne the burdens, and struggled in the pains of their vicarious feeling for men; and then, at last, how Christianity comes to its issue in begetting in us the same vicarious love that reigns in all the glorified and good minds of the heavenly kingdom; gathering us in after Christ our Master, as they have learned to bear His cross and be with Him in His passion.” †

According to these statements, there was nothing peculiar in our Lord’s afflictions more than in those which needs must be experienced by all good beings, whether divine, angelic, or human, when identifying themselves with others, and taking part in their adversities and troubles. ‡ His physical suffer-

\* Bushnell on ‘Vicarious Sacrifice,’ p. 6.

† Ibid., p. 17, 18.

‡ There are some strange positions advanced by Dr Bushnell into the discussion of which it is unnecessary here to enter. “*There is a cross in God,*” he says (p. 36), “before the wood is seen upon Calvary, hid in God’s own



ings, indeed, are not wholly overlooked ; but the place assigned to them is altogether subordinate to those purely moral or sympathetic sorrows which are held to constitute the essence of His sacrifice, and which (so far as is necessary to this theory) would of themselves have completed His gracious work, although there had been no death of ignominy endured by Him.

“The agony,” says Dr Bushnell, “gives in a sense the key-note of our Lord’s ministry, because it is pure moral suffering ; the suffering, that is, of a burdened love, and of a holy and pure sensibility, on which the hell of the world’s curse and retributive madness is just about to burst. . . . The moral tragedy of the garden is supplemented by the physical tragedy of the cross ; where Jesus, by not shrinking from so great bodily pains which the coarse and sensuous mind of the world will more easily appreciate, shows the moral suffering of God for sinners more affectingly, because He does it in a lower phase of natural sensibility.” \*

Now, I need scarcely observe that the views thus set forth are utterly opposed to the representations of the New Testament. Where do we there find any such things written as that “we are redeemed by the *moral sufferings* of Christ,” or “reconciled to God by His *mental anguish*,” or “saved by His *sympathetic feeling of our miseries*” ? Or where do we find “the physical tragedy of the cross” described in the language of inspiration as a mere accessory or “*supplement* to the moral tragedy of the garden” ? Unquestionably it is the *death* of Christ, and not His agony, that is spoken of in Scripture as “the key-note of His ministry.” His cross, and not His

virtue itself, struggling on heavily in burdened feeling through all previous ages, and struggling on heavily now, even in the throne of the world.” “*The Holy Spirit*” (p. 37) “*bears the sins of men precisely as Christ himself did in His sacrifice.*” “Vicarious sacrifice” (p. 66) “is not a point where Christ is distinguished from His followers, but the very life to which He restores them, in restoring them to God.” These, and the like assertions, in so far as they ascribe vicarious suffering to the followers of Christ, to the Holy Spirit, and to God the Father, in precisely the same sense in which it was endured by the Saviour in behalf of sinners, must be very startling to every humble reader of the New Testament.

\* Bushnell on ‘Vicarious Sacrifice,’ p. 178, 179.



sympathy, is emphatically declared to be "the power of God unto salvation."

But it is more to our present purpose to consider, How do the sufferings of Christ, according to this view of them, pre-eminently display to us, not only His own love, *but the love of His heavenly Father* in visiting Him with them in our behalf? What otherwise unattainable good do they secure for us, or what otherwise unavoidable evil do they avert from us—so incomparably excelling every other good or evil, that they should be held as affording a manifestation, altogether unequalled, of the fatherly love of God?

That they are of no avail in expiating our guilt or pacifying our conscience is freely admitted, or, I ought rather to say, is earnestly maintained. Our sins can no more be obliterated or atoned for by the mere sympathetic grief of the Saviour when contemplating them, than can the crimes of some abandoned profligate or of some irreclaimable criminal be extenuated by the shame or sorrow they have occasioned to his kinsmen.

But though, according to this view, our Lord's sufferings are not expiatory, may it not be said that they are *powerfully affecting*, or fitted to make a deep and salutary impression on our hearts? This might be said if we very warmly loved Him, or very highly appreciated the reason of His affliction. The anguish of a venerated mother or beloved wife, when witnessing the guilt and shame of her son or husband, might well be expected, at least temporarily, to affect him, if it could not avail for his permanent reformation. But there is no love on the part of sinners towards Him whose unearthly holiness is alien and repulsive to them. And what, therefore, does it matter to *them* in what way, or to what extent, His feelings may be excited on their account? Nor can the grief which their sins have occasioned Him suffice of itself to commend Him to their affection. For the sources of that grief they are unable to appreciate—springing, as it does, from His utter abhorrence of those sins which they fondly cherish and obstinately cling to, insomuch that He seems to be doing them an

injury, when pleading, even with tears, for the unsparing renunciation of them.

And here it is very important to remember, that the persons thus supposed to be impressed with the sufferings of Christ as a manifestation of divine love, are *those self-same sinful creatures* whose sanctification He travailed to accomplish. To *others*, who either have never sinned or have already repented, and who, accordingly, are able to appreciate the inestimable blessedness of a pure and godly life, the sufferings of Christ,—endured by Him for the purpose of bringing sinful men to the attainment of that blessedness,—may doubtless appear to be a marvellous display of love. But certainly they cannot be so esteemed by *the sinners themselves*, who are wedded to their sins and “alienated from the life of God,” and to whom it is like the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye, to suffer the excision of those carnal and worldly desires in the gratification of which they find their only happiness.

It is unnecessary to dwell on this topic, after what has been said on a kindred theory already discussed. I may be allowed, however, to appeal, in confirmation of the preceding argument, to the very notable concession of Dr Bushnell himself, towards the close of his treatise on ‘Vicarious Sacrifice.’ For it so happens that, after striving at great length for the establishment of his “*moral-power view* of the atonement,” and insisting that the opposite view of expiation and satisfaction is utterly untenable, alike on reasonable and on scriptural grounds, he astonishes his readers by telling them, at the close of his argument, that the simply moral view of our Lord’s sufferings, though alone defensible, is one from the preaching of which little good can be expected; whereas the objective and expiatory view of them, though entirely baseless, is alone fitted to produce any salutary moral impression!

“In the facts of our Lord’s passion,” he says, “outwardly regarded, there is no sacrifice, or oblation, or atonement, or propitiation, but simply a living and dying thus and thus. The facts are impressive; the person is clad in a wonderful dignity and beauty;

the agony is eloquent of love; and the cross a very shocking murder triumphantly met. And if, then, the question arises, How are we to use such a history so as to be reconciled by it? we hardly know in what way to begin. How shall we come to God by the help of this martyrdom? How shall we turn it, or turn ourselves under it, so as to be justified and set in peace with God? *Plainly there is a want here, and this want is met by giving a thought-form to the facts which is not in the facts themselves.* They are put directly into the moulds of the altar, and we are called to accept the crucified God-Man as our sacrifice, an offering or oblation for us, our propitiation, so as to be sprinkled from our evil conscience—washed, purged, and cleansed from our sin. Instead of leaving the matter of the facts just as they occurred, there is a reverting to familiar forms of thought made familiar for this purpose; and we are told, in brief, to use the facts just as we would the sin-offerings of the altar, and to make an altar-grace of them—only a grace complete and perfect, an offering once for all. . . . So much is there in this, that *without these forms of the altar we should be utterly at a loss in making any use of the Christian facts that would set us in a condition of practical reconciliation with God.* Christ is good, beautiful, wonderful; His disinterested love is a picture by itself; His forgiving patience melts into my feeling; His passion rends my heart. *But what is He for? And how shall He be made to me the salvation I want? One word—HE IS MY SACRIFICE—opens all to me; and, beholding Him with all my sin upon Him, I count Him my offering; I come unto God by Him, and enter into the holiest by His blood.*"

Again, he says, "We want to use these altar-terms just as freely as they are used by those who accept the formula of expiation or judicial satisfaction for sin; in just their manner too, when they are using them most practically. . . . We cannot afford to lose these sacred forms of the altar. They fill an office which nothing else can fill, and serve a use which cannot be served without them. It may, perhaps, be granted that, considering the advances of culture and reflection now made, we should use them less, and the forms of common language more; still, we have not gotten above the want of them, and we never shall. The most cultivated and intellectual disciple wants them now, and will get his dearest approaches to God in their use. We can do without them, it may be, for a little while; but after a time we seem to be *in a Gospel that has no atmosphere*, and our breathing is a gasping state."



Our very repentances are hampered by too great subjectivity, becoming, as it were, a pulling at our own shoulders. Our subjective applications of Christ get confused, and grow inefficacious. Our very prayers and thanksgivings get introverted and muddled. Trying to fight ourselves on in our wars, courage dies and impulse flags; and so we begin to sigh for some altar, whither we may go and just see the fire burning, and the smoke going up on its own account, and circle it about with our believing hymns; some element of day, into which we may come, and simply see, without superintending, the light." \*

Such is the notable concession of this able and eloquent author. I am sure we do not exaggerate its import when we hold it as substantially amounting to an affirmation that the *Moral-Power* view of our Lord's sufferings is *morally powerless*, and that the *objective view*, which the writer denounces as an irrational and indefensible "theologic fiction," is, after all, indispensable to the salvation of sinners! While constructing his system, he had argued and insisted that "The power of the cross is not in, or of, any consideration of a penal sacrifice, but is wholly extraneous; a Christ outside of the doctrine; dwelling altogether in the sublime facts of His person, His miracles, and passion."† But when he comes to put his system to the test, in the actual work of reconciling and reclaiming sinners, he finds himself obliged to acknowledge its insufficiency. "The facts of the Gospel outwardly regarded, with no sacrifice, or atonement, or propitiation involved in them," are now felt and owned to be utterly useless and inefficacious, until "they are put into the moulds of the altar, and we are called to accept the crucified God-Man as our sacrifice, an offering for us, our propitiation." "We must use these altar-forms just as freely as they are used by those who accept the formula of expiation or judicial satisfaction; in just their manner too, when they are using them most practically." And "so much is there in this that, without these forms of the altar, we should be utterly at a loss in making any use of

\* Bushnell on 'Vicarious Sacrifice,' p. 460-463.

† Ibid., Preface, p. xxxiii.



the Christian facts that would set us in a condition of practical reconciliation with God." Here, surely, there is somewhat of an approximation to Paul's statement that "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God;"\*—with this wide difference, however, that whereas the modern theorist *himself* regards as "foolishness" that mode of preaching the Gospel which he acknowledges to be alone effectual,—the ancient apostle, on the other hand, esteems it as not only the "*power*," but the "*wisdom*" and the *truth* of God.

Thus have we reviewed the most plausible of those theories which have been suggested in explanation of our Lord's sufferings, without reference to the expiatory virtues attributable to them as a true and proper vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world. And we have seen that, apart from these expiatory virtues, there are none of the other alleged benefits accruing from them which can be considered as vindicating their claim to the character uniformly ascribed to them in Holy Scripture of a superlative manifestation of the fatherly love and grace of God.

If these things be so, the advocates of evangelical truth have no cause to look on the fullest assertion of the divine fatherhood with aught of the jealousy with which sometimes they have regarded it. For, as we have now seen, the doctrine of God's fatherhood is perfectly consistent with sound scriptural views, at once of the *necessity* and of the *nature* of the atonement. And, as we have formerly observed, there is no other ground than that of the fatherly character sustained by Him on which we can possibly conceive of God as having so loved us as to give His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Certainly we do great injustice to the atonement if we give not the rightful place and prominence to God's paternal love in our conceptions of it. Apart from this, it assumes a cold judicial aspect that is but little calculated to allay our fears,

\* 1 Cor. i. 18.

and to “fill us with all joy and peace in believing.” Nay, it is apt to be regarded in the light in which it has sometimes been slanderously represented, as showing the Great God to be a stern and inexorable Being, averse to save sinners until He has been propitiated, and only moved to grant them a sullen and ungracious pardon by the pleading and sacrifice of His well-beloved Son. Not such, assuredly, is the view we ought to take of it. The Saviour has nowhere taught us to regard Himself as the primary source of mercy and salvation, but has uniformly spoken of all that He has done for us as a “doing of His Father’s will,” and a “finishing of His Father’s work.” And so far are His apostles from representing the mediation of Christ as inducing God to regard us with a love and pity that would otherwise be withheld from us, that, on the contrary, they point to the mediation of Christ as the brightest display and most wonderful commendation of God’s pre-existing love that could have been afforded. We must be careful, then, to view the atonement in this light. Never let us think of Christ as prevailing with God to grant us a salvation which He was unwilling to bestow,—but always as the substitute whom God himself was pleased to provide, because in His wonderful mercy He desired our salvation. We have in the mediation of Christ, not a way of escape from God, but a way of access to God, which God himself hath opened for us. It was necessary, for reasons satisfactory to the divine wisdom and goodness, that there should be an atonement offered for our guilt. But then, the same God who exacted the atonement has also provided it. And therefore, however much we may be disposed to magnify the love of Christ in dying for us, we ought not the less to magnify the love of the Father in giving up His Son to death on our behalf. “For herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Let it be further observed, that the very circumstance of the divine fatherhood being thus concerned in devising and providing the great remedy of the atonement, is that which, above all, shows sinners the necessity of giving immediate and

earnest heed to the offered grace. If it were only in His capacity of Judge or Ruler that God required our compliance with the terms of the Gospel, we might then cherish a lurking hope that, in the event of our despising them, His fatherly love might have something yet in reserve. But no; His fatherly love has already done its utmost. And if we refuse the provision it has made, we have nothing that is more gracious and compassionate in Him to look for. Well may we ask, then, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" and, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Before leaving this topic, I must briefly notice an objection to the fatherhood of God as manifested by the atonement, which may possibly be urged by some of those who hold with us *limited or special destination* of this great remedial provision for human guilt.

The atonement, they may urge, was intended to secure the salvation, not of all the members of the human family, but exclusively of those to whom it was God's purpose savingly to apply it by the grace of His Holy Spirit. Accordingly, it furnishes, we may be told, no proof of the fatherhood of God in relation to all mankind. It shows Him to be the Father of those who are eventually saved, but of none besides them.

Now it must be owned that the purposes of God, in their bearing on the atonement, as on every other subject with reference to which they may be brought into discussion, involve mysteries which are too deep for the intellect of man to fathom. But, happily, it is not necessary to enter into these mysteries in meeting the objection with which we are now called to deal. For however limited or definite may be our views of the destination of the atonement in the secret purposes of Him who orders all things after the counsel of His will, there are certain broad and patent facts respecting it, which, not the less on that account, we find ourselves obliged to believe, and in virtue of which we cannot otherwise regard it than as gloriously illustrative of the general paternity of God.



For example, we believe in its *full perfection and sufficiency*, as an adequate propitiation for the sins of the whole world,—insomuch that no other or greater atonement would have been necessary to secure the salvation of every member of our fallen race.\* We believe also in the *unlimited freeness and universality of the offers* in which it is held out to our acceptance,—insomuch that there is nothing to prevent any or every sinner from seeking an interest in the blessings it has secured; or rather there is nothing to excuse any or every sinner for declining, when thus solicited, to take advantage of the offered mercy. And farther, we believe that in addressing to us these unlimited calls, *the God of all grace is sincerely seeking our compliance with them*, and that, in terms of His own solemn declarations, “He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live,”†—“He will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,”‡—and “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”§

These things, indeed, we may not be able to reconcile with God’s secret purpose to bring an elect people to a willing and hearty reception of the great salvation. We are confident, however, that *to the eye of God* they are reconcilable, like many other things in His unsearchable works and ways which seem to our limited faculties equally mysterious. And for our part, we find ourselves necessitated to *believe both the one and the other* (however unable to discover the *nexus* between the two), on the clear scriptural grounds which may severally be assigned for them. Now, what is it to believe both? It is just, in other words, to believe that God is exhibited, in the great scheme of human redemption, as acting the part of a father towards all mankind,—and yet not the less as specially a father to those of whom it is written, that He has “predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the

\* See Note K.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

§ 2 Peter iii. 9.



praise of the glory of His grace.”\* Doubtless He is, in a peculiar sense, the Father of such as are thus actually “blessed of Him in Christ Jesus with all spiritual and heavenly blessings.” But neither can it be questioned that His dealings are of a fatherly character towards the whole fallen race of Adam without distinction, when we find Him giving His only-begotten Son as an adequate “propitiation for the sins of the whole world,”—freely inviting and earnestly importuning all sinners to come and avail themselves of the offered grace, and withal most solemnly and, as we cannot doubt, sincerely declaring, that AS HE LIVETH, *He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that they should return to Him and live.*

We do well to be exceedingly diffident in our judgments on matters so unsearchable as the secret purposes of God. Whatever the Scriptures may have *expressly affirmed* respecting the fact *that God has such purposes*, we are bound, in a humble and teachable spirit, to believe. But when we proceed to *draw inferences* from such affirmations, to the effect of weakening our confidence in other statements emanating from the same source, and equally explicit, with reference to things that are more level to our comprehension, we are certainly going beyond our proper province. And therefore, convinced though we be, on the authority of Scripture, that the sacrifice of Christ was offered with a special reference to those who shall eventually be partakers of its benefits,—we cannot, and never will, thence deduce any conclusions tending to obscure the brightness of that manifestation, which the Great Father hath made of His love to a sinful world in the mediatorial work and sufferings of His beloved Son, or to cast a shadow of doubt on the earnestness of His desire, as indicated in the calls and invitations of the Gospel, that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved.

\* Eph. i. 5, 6.

## LECTURE VI.

### FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN RELATION TO BELIEVERS.

HAVING closed our remarks on the fatherhood of God in relation to all men as His rational and moral creatures, we are now prepared to consider it in its special reference to those who are "His children by faith in Christ Jesus."

That God must be held to be the Father of true believers in some higher sense than of other men, is evident from many express statements of Holy Scripture. Thus the evangelist John, speaking of the Saviour when "He came to His own, and His own received Him not," declares that "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."\* The same inspired writer, in one of his epistles, having just stated that "every one that doeth righteousness is born of God," breaks forth into this exclamation of adoring gratitude, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."† The Apostle Paul in like manner assures the Romans, that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," that they "have received, not the spirit

\* John i. 12, 13.

† 1 John iii. 1, 2.

of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," and that "if children, then are they heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."\* The same apostle thus earnestly admonishes the Corinthians, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."† He says to the Galatians also, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" and, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."‡ And addressing himself to the saints and faithful brethren at Ephesus, he declares that "God hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."§

In these and other passages of Holy Scripture there is evidently mention made of a divine sonship which is not a common prerogative of all mankind,—a sonship which originates in the special grace of God—is founded on the mediatorial work of the Redeemer—is restricted to those who receive Christ, or believe on His name—and is certified and sealed by the work of the Holy Spirit, producing filial dispositions in the heart, and bringing forth the fruits of holiness in the conduct.

There may appear to be somewhat of a difficulty in reconciling these statements with the conclusions we have already arrived at; more particularly may there seem to be a difficulty involved in the scriptural application of the word *adoption* to those who by divine grace are "received into the number, and obtain a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." For this word *adoption* properly denotes the introduction into a family of one who does not belong to it by birth. And how then, it may be asked, can we apply it to believers, when the standing and rights of God's children are conferred upon them,

\* Rom. viii. 14, 15, 17.

† 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

‡ Gal. iii. 26, iv. 6.

§ Eph. i. 5, 6.

if, in common with all His reasonable creatures, they had from the first been numbered among His offspring?

This apparent difficulty, however, admits of a satisfactory solution. I do not conceive it to be by any means insuperable, even if the grace of adoption were purely remedial and restorative. For though all mankind, as created in the image of God, and largely partaking of His providential goodness, may be with propriety regarded as His children, yet, as the consequence of the Fall, they have been alienated from Him. Sin has defaced in them the lineaments of His image,—forfeited their title to His favour,—estranged them from His fellowship,—and exposed them to His merited wrath. They cannot now be considered as His children, in the same full and precious sense of the expression in which their progenitors were so, when at first created. It may still be said of their sonship indeed, that the “relation stands.” But they have lost its privileges, and repudiated its obligations. They do not regard the “Father of their spirits” with filial reverence, confidence, and affection. And even His fatherly dealings with them, in their unregeneracy, are in a great measure limited to temporal mercies. In so far as regards His spiritual and heavenly blessings, they are outcasts from His family,—disowned and disinherited.

I have much satisfaction in quoting, as to this matter, the following judicious remarks of Professor Buchanan :—

“Our natural relation,” he says, “to God as our Father, has become sadly disturbed by sin. We have become ‘the children of disobedience,’ and as such, ‘the children of wrath.’ And it is only by the grace of Adoption that we can be raised to the enjoyment of filial privileges and the exercise of filial affections. But it is equally true that the original relation is presupposed in the doctrine of the Gospel, which is designed to *restore* us to the condition in which man was created; and also that a relation depending, not on our moral character, but on the fact of our being His creatures, can never be abrogated or annulled, but must endure for ever, if not as the ground of holy and happy fellowship, yet as the awful aggravation of our guilt and debasement.” \*

\* Buchanan’s ‘Faith in God and Modern Atheism,’ vol. ii. p. 334.



Again, says the same writer, "The original relation in which man stood to God is widely different from that which supervened after his fall, whether he be considered as a subject or as a son ; for the relation of subjection and of sonship might equally be affected by sin. . . . He never ceased to be a creature, but he is now a fallen creature ; he never ceased to be a subject, but he is now a rebellious subject ; he never ceased to be a son, but he is now one of the children of disobedience and of wrath." \*

Such being the case, there would be no impropriety in the scriptural application to redeemed sinners of the term *adoption*, even were there nothing more implied in it than a full restoration of the privileges of their original sonship, or a cordial reception of them by the great Father as reclaimed prodigals, who might, as regards their connection with His household, be virtually said to have been "dead," and to be "alive again."

We are not prepared, however, to admit that adoption is merely remedial and restorative. It has generally been held by theologians, that though every part of the work of redeeming grace has reference to the fallen condition of human nature, and takes accordingly the form of a restitution of that which has degenerated to its primitive and normal state, yet in the carrying out of this process of restitution there are high and potent agencies employed, with which we can scarcely suppose humanity to be brought into contact without having all its original elements and characteristics not only restored, but gloriously elevated and transfigured, insomuch that far more than was lost in Adam shall be gained in Christ.

It is so in this department of adoption, as well as in other departments of the scheme of grace. Although one and the same human analogy be employed, as apparently the most appropriate that can be thought of, to represent alike the sonship of believers and the sonship of all the members of the human race, we are not thence to conclude that the two relations are identical, or that nothing more is included in the one than a mere rectification or revival of the other. The sonship of believers has not only the original ground of creation and

\* Buchanan's 'Doctrine of Justification,' p. 209.

of providence to rest upon, but the superinduced grounds of discriminating grace, redeeming love, regenerating agency, and covenanted promises, in which none else besides themselves can claim an interest. And the benefits flowing from it are not only such mercies as the "God of the spirits of all flesh" is pleased to lavish with undistinguishing bounty on His intelligent offspring, nor yet only such forfeited privileges, again restored, as unfallen man might have enjoyed in a terrestrial paradise,—but "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"—a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

It cannot be said, then, that the two relations are identical, or that they are by any means equivalent to one another. Just as we read that "God is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe,"\*—so may He be said to be their Father. Within the wide range of His universal family there is an inner family comprehended, who are in a more peculiar sense the objects of His paternal love. These are no other than the true members of His Church, who are styled "the house of God," or "the household of faith," and to whom Paul alludes when he speaks of "bowing the knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."† There is still room, therefore, for our being adopted into this special family of God, although we already belong to His general family of mankind. Our sonship as His mere creatures, above all as His fallen creatures, does not imply participation in this higher sonship. It still remains that "we who are afar off be brought nigh by the blood of Christ"—that we who are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise," be constituted "fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God."

Nor let it be forgotten, that *adoption* is significant, if not of a forensic, at all events of a *federal*, transaction. In those

\* 1 Tim. iv. 10.

† Eph. iii. 14, 15.

countries in which this practice prevailed in ancient times it was regulated by statute, sanctioned by judicial forms, and carried out by solemn and binding stipulations. In this respect the word may with peculiar fitness be applied to the covenant engagements of God with His redeemed people, when, instead of leaving His paternity to be collected by mere inferences from His works of creation and of providence, He gives them the plighted assurances of His word, confirmed by the inward testimony of His Holy Spirit, that they are “children of God; and if children, then heirs,—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

These considerations appear to me sufficient to solve the apparent difficulty to which I have adverted. But even were they not so, we might reasonably have recourse to the necessary inadequacy of all human analogies to furnish a strictly accurate representation of the divine procedure. When, for example, we speak of *justification*, we use a word that is ordinarily significant of the acquittal, on his own merits, of one who is proved to be innocent. But yet we apply it, conformably to the scriptural usage, to the receiving as righteous, through the merits of Jesus Christ, of one who is undeniably and confessedly guilty. In like manner, apart from the general sonship of all mankind, there is an apparent incongruity in using the two words *Regeneration* and *Adoption* with reference to believers, if we insist on giving to each its strict and literal meaning. For the circumstance of believers being spiritually “*born of God*” would seem to preclude their sonship by *adoption*. The truth is, however, that in speaking of the Lord’s doings in human language, we must be content to use the language of approximation. And if we are to object to phraseology when applied to Him, although it be the fittest we are able to find, on the ground of its not being in the minutest points strictly applicable, in that case we must cease to speak of God at all.

That the sonship of believers differs very widely from that which may be attributed to all men with reference to God as the “Father of their spirits,” will sufficiently appear, if we



consider more particularly *its origin in the sovereign and discriminating grace of God ; its connection with the person and work of the Redeemer ; and its restriction to those who are united to Him by faith.*

I. The sonship of believers, like all their other privileges, originates in the sovereign and discriminating grace of God. By nature they have no claim or title to the enjoyment of it. And when the question is put with respect to it, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" they can give, each one of them, no other than the apostle's answer, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

That such is the case with this great privilege might be reasonably inferred from the scriptural use of the word *adoption* as applied to it. For the human transaction signified by that expression is, as regards the subject of it, entirely gracious—the adopted child having no inherent right to share in the blessings and endearments of a family to which by birth he did not naturally belong. It is true, the adopting parent may be actuated by motives which tend, so far as *he* is concerned, to lower our sense of the graciousness of the proceeding,—such as the yearning desire he may have to supply the lack or the loss of his own offspring, or perhaps the discovery of certain excellent and engaging qualities, either real or supposed, in the person to be adopted by him. But there is no room for supposing the great God to be moved by any such considerations. It is certain that He stands in no need of us; and equally so, that He sees nothing attractive in us. Although our whole race were swept out of existence, He would not lack myriads to people His heavenly mansions. And so far are we from having anything about us to conciliate His favour, or commend us to His regard, that, on the contrary, everything He beholds in us must, to His pure eye, be displeasing and repulsive. Assuredly, then, His adoption of us can be traced to no other source than gratuitous and unmerited love. Indeed, were the mightiest and most renowned of earthly monarchs to assume as his son and heir the child of the poorest



beggar, or most abject slave, or vilest criminal, or most incorrigible rebel in his dominions, it would be a faint type of the grace of the King of kings in appointing those who are miserable sinners, bondmen of Satan and children of wrath, to be sons of God and heirs of glory.

Accordingly the beloved disciple, in a passage already quoted, expresses his deep sense of the unparalleled love of God in conferring so high a privilege on His people, by exclaiming, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" He does not enlarge on the freeness, greatness, and preciousness of the divine love as thus displayed towards us; he seems as if at a loss for adequate words wherewith to describe what manner of love it was; and he simply refers to the great things it has done for us, and calls us to "behold" it with grateful and adoring wonder.

A still more striking representation of the grace of God, as manifested in this and in all our other spiritual privileges, is given in that noble doxology with which, after a brief introductory salutation, St Paul begins his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; *having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace*, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

The *persons* with whom the apostle here associates himself in thankfully acknowledging the grace that had been conferred on them, are styled by him "the saints at Ephesus and the

faithful in Christ Jesus," being those who made a fair, consistent, and credible profession of Christianity, and whom, accordingly, he was called, in the judgment of charity, to regard and represent as Christians indeed.

The *benefits* which he speaks of these persons as having received from God in common with himself, are no mere ecclesiastical privileges or outward advantages, pertaining indiscriminately to all members of the visible Church, whether they were Christians in name only or in reality; but such blessings as belong exclusively to true believers,—“redemption,” “forgiveness of sins,” “holiness,” “adoption,” “a heavenly inheritance,”—in short, “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Nor is it with the mere *offer* of these benefits that the saints at Ephesus are here said to have been favoured, but with *the benefits themselves*, in actual possession or in sure prospect.

The chief thing, however, which in this passage we are concerned to notice, is *the source in which the benefits have originated*. And as to this matter the statement of the apostle is altogether explicit and unequivocal. We learn from it that the adoption of the faithful, and all the other blessings connected with it, must be traced to no personal excellences, exertions, or attainments on their own part, but to the gracious purpose or appointment of God, “according to the good pleasure of His will.”

I am aware that many persons are disposed to regard with extreme aversion any such reference as that which is plainly and pointedly made in this passage to the deeply mysterious subject of the divine purposes. Perhaps it might tend in some degree to lessen the prejudice with which this subject is regarded by them, did they duly consider the relation which subsists between the purposes of God and His actual procedure. For what are the purposes of God but simply His prior intention to do, or to permit to be done, those self-same things which, when their time comes, are actually brought to pass? The doctrine of predestination substantially amounts to *this*,—that whatever God does, He always intended to do;

and whatever God permits to be done by other free agents, He always intended to permit. The only effect of this doctrine is, to trace back the procedure of God, such as we actually find it to be, to a previous intention—eternal and unchangeable like Himself—that that procedure, and no other, should eventually be adopted by Him. And hence I do not see why the doctrine should be considered as detracting either from the perfections of God or from the free agency of man. If that which God does, when the time has come for doing it, be consistent with the adorable attributes of His character, His having had a purpose to do it cannot make it otherwise. Nor can His purpose, considered simply as such, be supposed to overbear the freedom of our will, or indeed to exercise any influence whatever upon us; for until it is executed, it is wholly confined to God himself. It must first have effect given to it in His actual procedure—that is to say, it must cease to be a mere purpose, by being carried out and embodied in action—before any creature in the universe can be influenced by it.\*

These considerations appear to me sufficient to show that no reasonable exception can be taken to the *divine purposes*, further than a like exception may be taken to the *divine procedure*. For if there be nothing unworthy of God in the *actual doing* of certain things, when they are done by Him—as, for example, in giving to some men (as He certainly does), and not to others, the converting grace of His Holy Spirit—neither can there be anything unworthy of God in His previous purpose to do these very things, however long ago that purpose may have been formed by Him. We must look at *the things themselves* which are brought to pass; and unless we are prepared to find fault with these things as they actually emerge in the divine administration, we cannot consistently find fault with the purposes of God, in which the same things—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else—were contemplated or predetermined.

I am unwilling to complicate our discussion by dwelling more than is necessary on this mysterious subject. At the

\* See Note L.



same time, it is impossible to ignore the broad references to it that are made in the passage before us. Nor can it be questioned that these references are of such a kind as clearly to evince the point we are concerned to establish—namely, that the sonship of believers, in common with all their privileges, must be traced to the sovereign and discriminating grace of God. For the people of God are here said to be “blessed by Him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world.” They are said to have “obtained an inheritance in Christ, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” And more particularly, God is said to have “predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Nor is there any room left for the supposition that God’s gracious purposes respecting them may have been owing to any personal qualities or attainments by which He foresaw that in due time they would be distinguished, as causes or reasons moving Him thus to favour them. For we are expressly told that they were “chosen by Him, *that they should be* holy and without blame before Him in love;” so that their personal qualities and attainments must be viewed as the *result*, and not the *reason*, of His having chosen them. On the whole, it seems scarcely possible to imagine a broader or more explicit declaration than is here given us, that the evangelical adoption, with all its attendant privileges, originates in the special and sovereign grace of God.

II. Another point of distinction, however, which must be noticed, between the sonship of believers and that which may be attributed to all men with reference to the “Father of their spirits,” is *its connection with the person and mediation of the Saviour*.

In that striking passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians, to which I have already alluded, there is a continual reference to



Jesus Christ in connection with all the privileges of the faithful. It is "*in Christ*" that they are "blessed with all spiritual blessings;" "*in Christ*" that they are "chosen before the foundation of the world;" "*in Christ*" that they "have redemption through His blood;" "*in Christ*" that they "have obtained an inheritance." And "the adoption of children," to which they are predestinated, is said to be "*by Jesus Christ*, according to the good pleasure of God's will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made them accepted *in the Beloved*."

A like connection is affirmed in other passages—as when we are told that "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;"\* that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;"† and that "as many as received Christ, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."‡

In so far as the evangelical adoption is *restorative* of the full privileges of sonship, enjoyed by Adam before the Fall, we may readily apprehend the nature and grounds of this connection. For it is through the mediatorial work of Christ that a remedy is provided for all the evils of our fallen condition. Our sins are expiated by the virtues of His great sacrifice, and our souls are purified by the grace of His Holy Spirit. On the part of God every obstacle is thus removed to the fullest and freest extension of His fatherly goodness towards such as are reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ; and on the part of believers there is a like removal of all impediments to their filial walk with God. Their dark and fearful apprehensions of His wrath are exchanged for cheerful confidence in His loving-kindness. And as they grow in grace the features of His image are more and more fully developed in their hearts, so that they are enabled to find an increasing blessedness in the joys of His favour and the endearments of His fellowship.

But this is not all. For while the evangelical adoption implies a restitution of the full privileges of Adam's sonship, the

\* Gal. iii. 26.

† Gal. iv. 4, 5.

‡ John i. 12.

agency by which this restitution has been effected is such as may not unreasonably be held to give to the restored sonship a far higher dignity and excellency and blessedness than originally pertained to it. When we think that believers receive the adoption of sons through their union or fellowship with that adorable Being who is emphatically represented in the Scriptures as "*God's own Son*," or His "*only-begotten Son*," in a sense that is altogether peculiar and incommunicable, there seems to be nothing unwarranted in the conclusion that their sonship is not only restored to the same condition in which it was possessed by our first parents before the Fall, but that it is gloriously elevated and ennobled—raised to a higher platform, transformed after a grander type, and fraught with incomparably greater honours and richer blessings. Nor are there wanting intimations in the Word of God, which give an apparent countenance to this conclusion. Thus St Paul tells us that believers, being God's children, are "heirs of God and *joint-heirs with Christ*, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." \* The same apostle speaks of the elect as "predestinated to be conformed *to the image*," not of unfallen Adam, but "*of the Son of God, that He*," the eternal Son, "*might be the first-born among many brethren*." † To the same effect we find St John declaring, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as he is." ‡ In like manner, our Lord, on the eve of His last sufferings, prays not only for His apostles, but for all believers, "that they may be one, as He and His Father are one;" and says of them, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." § And in the Apocalypse He makes this glorious promise, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with

\* Rom. viii. 17.

‡ 1 John iii. 2.

† Rom. viii. 29.

§ John xvii. 22, 23.

me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." \* From these, not to mention other passages of like import, it would seem as if there were now secured for the children of God something far higher than the lost privileges of Adam's sonship. Their adoption doubtless includes a restoration of these privileges. But it includes also somewhat of a conformity to that adorable Being, the only-begotten Son of God, by whose agency this restoration has been effected, and somewhat of a participation or fellowship with Him in the endearments of His Father's love, and the glories of His Father's kingdom.

It becomes us, indeed, to speak with much caution on a subject which so greatly exceeds the range of our faculties, and in regard to which the Scriptures have not given us any very precise or definite information. And it would certainly be unwarrantable to affirm that the sonship of believers is identically the same relation with that of the second person in the Godhead to the Eternal Father. For the difference must be allowed to be immeasurable between the filial standing of that august Being who is emphatically "*God's own and only-begotten Son*"—His Son by a necessity of nature and a unity of substance—and the sonship of those redeemed sinners who become His children by adoption into His household and assimilation to His likeness. At the same time, when we find it written of believers that they are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God;" that they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" that Christ speaks of "giving to them the glory which His Father gave to Him," and of sharing with them "the love with which His Father hath loved Him," and of "seating them with Himself upon His throne, even as He is set down with His Father upon His throne,"—we seem to have good and sufficient grounds for the persuasion that God's adopted ones have fellowship with their Redeemer in the blessedness and dignity resulting from His sonship, in so far as these may be communicable to created beings; and that at all events the privileges enjoyed by them,

\* Rev. iii. 21.



in virtue of their union and communion with the Son of God, are incomparably more excellent and exalted than any which our first parents could have experienced in the earthly paradise.

III. A third peculiarity, however, by which the evangelical adoption is distinguished from the natural sonship of all mankind, is *its restriction to those who are united to Christ by faith*.

Of the fact that adoption is so restricted there is abundant evidence. In proof of this point I may simply refer to the following texts, which are too plain and explicit to require any comment:—

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”\* “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”† “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”‡ “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”§ “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”|| “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”¶

From these passages it is much too clear to be controverted that the evangelical sonship is limited to those who are true believers in Jesus Christ, and who show the sincerity of their faith in Him by its practical fruits.

Nor is there any difficulty in assigning a satisfactory reason for this limitation. For if we take that admirable definition

\* John i. 12, 13.

§ 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

† Gal. iii. 26, iv. 6.

|| Rev. xxi. 7.

‡ Rom. viii. 14.

¶ 1 John iii. 2, 3.



of faith in Christ which is given in our Catechism, as “a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel,” we may readily understand how it should come to pass that faith is the means of obtaining adoption, as well as all the other blessings of the great salvation. It is so, simply because it is *the act of receiving them*, or rather of trustfully receiving Christ who is the source of them. Christ and all his blessings are freely offered to us. They are not forced upon us, whether we will have them or not; but they are held out to all who will accept of them. Now faith is simply our trustful reception of them; and as being so, it is the means of our obtaining them. Hence, if we have not faith, we are necessarily excluded from all participation in the blessings of the Gospel, for no other reason than our own refusal to partake of them.

Reasonable, however, as this doctrine appears to be, and clear as are the scriptural testimonies by which it may be established, there is a popular school of modern theologians to whose principles it is decidedly opposed. It is broadly affirmed by Mr Maurice and his followers that the evangelical sonship, and all the other spiritual benefits procured by the mediation of the Saviour, are actually conferred on every member of the human race; that Christ, the Son of God, being one with every man—the true root and original archetype of humanity—all mankind are in Him redeemed, regenerated, justified, and adopted; and consequently that faith has nothing left to be done by it in the way of receiving or uniting us to Christ, and of thereby making us partakers of His benefits; its only function being to discern Christ as already one with us, and to recognise His benefits as already fully pertaining to us.

Thus Mr Maurice, when speaking of the Son of God as justified by His resurrection from the dead, maintains that “this justification of the Son of God was regarded by the Apostle Paul as *his own* justification, not because he was Saul of Tarsus, not because he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, but *because he was a man*,” that “Christ’s resurrection declared

Him to be the Head of man, and His justification accordingly to be *the justification of each man* ;” and that “ God, when He justified His Son by raising Him from the dead, *did in that act justify the race for which Christ died* ; so that it is lawful to tell men that *they are justified before God, and are the sons of God in the only-begotten Son.*” \*

Again, in his Essay on Regeneration, he thus expresses himself :—

“ Every great article in the Church’s creed presumes the revelation of a Son of God as the root of righteousness in every human being, as the centre and corner-stone of humanity itself. Supposing such a person to be actually revealed, it would seem as if the regeneration of man, in the most radical sense one can dream of it, has not been commenced only, *but effected*,—*not for a few of us, but for all*. If it can be said that God has manifested His Son, made of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons—if these words could be preached to men of all kindreds and of all characters eighteen hundred years ago, then the idea of regeneration, as the restoration of human beings to their true filial position in Christ,—of mankind to its unity in Him,—is fulfilled. The sin of man, which consists in this denial of his filial relationship to God, and of his fraternal relation to the members of his own species, is taken away in Christ. The constitution of humanity is restored.” †

Another distinguished writer of the same school, when discoursing on the subject of baptism, makes the following statements :—

“ Christ proclaimed God the Father, man the son ; revealed that the son of man is also the son of God ; that man, as man, is God’s child. He came to redeem the world from that ignorance of the relationship which had left them in heart aliens and unregenerate. Human nature, therefore, became, viewed in Christ, a holy thing and divine. The revelation is a common humanity, sanctified in God. The appearance of the Son of God is the sanctification of the human race.” “ Now, there was wanted a permanent and authoritative pledge revealing and confirming this. Such a pledge is baptism. Baptism authoritatively pledges to the individual that which is true of the race. Baptism takes the child and addresses it by

\* ‘ Theological Essays,’ p. 199, 200, 201.

† Ibid., p. 226.

name ; Paul—no longer Saul—you are a child of God, you are a member of Christ, you are an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Observe, however, baptism does not *create* a child of God ; it authoritatively declares him. And so with faith. Faith does not create a child of God any more than baptism : it does not make the fact ; it only appropriates that which is a fact already. Here lies the error, in basis identical, of the Romanist and the Calvinist. Faith is to the one what baptism is to the other, the creator of a fact ; whereas they both *rest* upon a fact, which is a fact whether they exist or not, and before they exist ; nay, without whose previous existence both of them are unmeaning and false.” \*

Thus does it appear that, according to these writers, adoption, and all the other privileges of the Gospel, are actually conferred, through Jesus Christ, on all mankind ; and that the function or province of faith is, not to receive Christ to the effect of obtaining His benefits, but simply to discern and acknowledge Him as one with us, and to recognise His benefits as already in our possession.

Now, apart from the contrariety of this theory to what I conceive to be the plain teaching of Holy Scripture, there is this evident defect in it, that it does not indicate any distinct or intelligible bond of union between the Saviour and those who are partakers of His spiritual blessings. No such perceptible bond of union can be found in the vague and mystical representation of the Son of God as the “root of man,” or “the archetype of humanity,” even if the fact of His being so were a revealed truth, instead of being a mere philosophical speculation.

I might justly take exception to any such representation, as resting on no sound basis of scriptural authority. With some appearance of plausibility, indeed, the Son of God might be styled the archetype of *unfallen* humanity, inasmuch as He is the “image of the invisible God,” “the express image of His person,” while man also is said to have been “created after the image of God.” But with no such propriety can the Son of God be considered as standing in the same relation to human-

\* Robertson’s ‘Sermons,’ 2d series, p. 63, 64.



ity in its fallen state. For the image of God, as originally impressed on man, has by the Fall been distorted and defaced, so that he no longer answers to his archetype. In respect of everything that truly constitutes the moral rectitude and excellence of the Son of God, mankind, as we now find them prior to their conversion, are so far from being "*one with Him*," or from being entitled to claim identity or conformity with Him, that they are essentially opposite to Him, and alienated from Him. It behoves them, according to the express statements of Scripture, to be "created anew after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness," in order to be conformed to the Son of God. And to speak, therefore, of the Son of God as the archetype of all men without distinction in their fallen state, not excepting those who are most of all tainted with the pollutions and enslaved in the bondage of sin, appears to me to be unreasonable and unscriptural in the highest degree.

But even were the case otherwise, I am utterly at a loss to discover in the alleged fact of His being "the original archetype of humanity," any intelligible ground on which it can be held that all the Father's dealings with Him, and all His dealings with the Father, must necessarily redound to the benefit of each and every individual of the human race, irrespective of anything *done in us or by us* that might bring us as personal agents into union or communion with him. I scarcely think any man will say that he has a consciousness or an inward conviction of any such thing as that "he and the Son of God are actually one," or that "the Son of God is the root of his manhood," in such a sense that whatever is done *by* the Son of God is done *by* himself, and whatever is done *to* the Son of God is done *to* himself,—that the self-sacrifice of the Son of God is the self-sacrifice of all humanity, and that the justification of the Son of God, when He was raised from the dead, is the justification of each and every man! For this identification of the Son of God, either with all men collectively or with each man individually, there is no ground in the nature of things that is assignable or conceivable.

The case is very different in this respect with the evangeli-



cal doctrine as commonly received among us. Whatever there may be that passes our comprehension in the justification and adoption of believers through faith in the merits and grace of the Redeemer, it cannot be charged with any such want of connection between the parties severally concerned in procuring and in receiving the benefits, as marks the theory to which I have just adverted. For while, on the one hand, the Son of God has undertaken, in conformity with the gracious purpose of His heavenly Father, to assume the human nature and become obedient unto death, that whosoever believeth on Him may be justified, adopted, and blessed with all spiritual blessings; it is, on the other hand, provided and required that those who are actually to be benefited by His mediation must personally receive Him, and rest upon Him as their Saviour. Their faith unites them to Him, or secures their interest in Him. It does so in a manner that is perfectly simple and intelligible, as implying in its very nature their trustful and hearty acceptance of Him. And no benefits actually accrue to them from His mediation, until they have thus been brought into connection with Him by the exercise of an appropriating and confiding faith.\*

We are told, indeed, that "faith does not make the fact of our sonship, but rests upon it as previously existing; and that without the previous existence of the sonship our faith in it would be unmeaning and false." This objection, however, proceeds on an utter misconception of the proper function and province of faith. In truth, it confounds faith with assurance. To *recognise our sonship*, which doubtless implies its prior attainment, is what has been usually called the "reflex act of faith," as distinguished from what must be viewed as its "direct act." The proper object of faith is, not the fact that *we are sons of God*, but the revealed truth that *Christ is able and willing to make us so*. And the proper office of faith is, not to recognise His benefits *as already actually put into our possession*, but to "receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel," *in order that His*

\* See Note M.

*benefits may thus come into our possession*, by no other than the perfectly simple and intelligible process of trustfully receiving Him with all His benefits for our behoof.

But while the theory of Mr Maurice is thus defective, as indicating no intelligible bond of union between the Saviour and those to whom His blessings are communicated, it is further objectionable on the much more serious ground of its contrariety to the plain teaching of the Word of God.\* For if there be one thing more distinctly and unequivocally declared in Scripture than another, it is that the benefits of redemption are not conferred on all men prior to, and irrespective of, their faith. It is most certain, indeed, that they are *freely offered to all*; and hence by some it has been plausibly, although I fully believe unwarrantably, concluded, that in the secret pur-

\* The advocates of the theory above noticed, says Dr Buchanan, "attempt to establish an indissoluble connection between the sonship of man and that of the Son of God. They affirm, that we were created in *Him*, and not in Adam, since Adam himself had the root of his being in the Eternal Son—that the Logos is the Archetype of the human race—that by the constitution of their nature, He is in every man and every man in Him—that His indwelling presence is unchangeable, and can never cease to be true—that it may be hidden or obscured, forgotten or not duly realised, in consequence of the darkness and disorder occasioned by sin, but that it needs only to be discerned and believed, in order to regenerate the soul and restore it to a conscious enjoyment of God's unchangeable love—and that all men, even in their worst state, are, and have always been, and must ever continue to be, the objects of that love, simply because He sees His Son in them, and looks on them as existing in His Son.

"The chief difficulty in answering this allegation arises from the extreme difficulty of ascertaining its real import. We were created *by* the Eternal Word, and *for* Him (Coloss. i. 16, 17); but how can it be said that we were created *in* Him? Was *He* created? Or must there not have been, as Athanasius argued against the Arians, an Eternal Son, if there was an Eternal Father? And if His divine filiation was necessary and eternal, how can His peculiar, unparalleled, and incommunicable Sonship be shared by any creature, either by the law of creation, or even by the grace of adoption? Besides, it is not as the Eternal Word, but as the Word incarnate,—it is not by the Logos, but by the Loganthropos,—and it is not by the mere fact of His incarnation, but by His Mediatorial work, when 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' that Christ is the Redeemer of His people. And any doctrine which connects our salvation with His mere Sonship in a state of pre-existence, or even with His Sonship as manifested in time by His incarnation, may be justly said to evacuate the whole Gospel, and to explain away all that is most essential in the scheme and work of human redemption."—Buchanan on 'Justification,' p. 210, 211.

pose of God they are *intended* for all; but that they are *actually imparted* to all, it is impossible to maintain without setting the doctrine of the New Testament at utter defiance. For it is there written: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life;" "*He that believeth in Him* is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God;" "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *believing ye might have life* through His name;" "By Him *all that believe are justified* from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses;" "Being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we *have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*;" "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." \* And more particularly with reference to adoption, we find it expressly stated in passages already referred to, that believers "are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus," and that "*as many as received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on His name*."

These scriptural testimonies render it abundantly clear, that there is no indiscriminate elevation of the whole human family to the enjoyment of that spiritual sonship, and of those other blessings and privileges connected with it, which the mediatorial work of the Saviour has procured; but that, on the contrary, the enjoyment of them is restricted to those who are united to Him by faith, and who prove themselves to be so by that personal conformity to Him, of which a true faith is invariably productive.

\* John iii. 16, 18, xx. 31; Acts xiii. 39; Rom. v. 1, 2, x. 4.



## LECTURE VII.

### THE SONSHIP OF BELIEVERS AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN.

IN my last Lecture I endeavoured to illustrate some of the chief points of distinction which may be noticed between the sonship pertaining to believers and that which may be attributed to all men, with reference to God as the "Father of their spirits." And among other special characteristics by which the evangelical adoption is distinguished, I had occasion to observe that there is included in it, not only a restoration of the lost privileges of Adam's sonship, but also somewhat of a conformity to that adorable Being—the only-begotten Son of God—by whose agency this restoration is effected; and somewhat of a participation or fellowship with Him in the endearments of His Father's love, and the glories of His Father's kingdom.

In connection with this topic, it is necessary to advert to the novel and very peculiar doctrine that has been set forth by the same ingenious author whose denial of the general pater-nity of God we have already discussed. His doctrine may be thus stated: *That the sonship which God confers on His redeemed people is substantially the same with that of their Redeemer himself*,—differing, indeed, as to the grounds on which it rests, and the period or date at which it is constituted, but otherwise the same identical relation which subsists between the Eternal Father and His only-begotten Son.

As this statement, however, cannot fail to appear exceedingly strange and startling on the first announcement of it, I



deem it necessary, before entering on the discussion of it, to show that it really contains a faithful exposition of the sentiments of the writer to whom I have ascribed it. For this purpose a few brief references will be sufficient.

Thus he affirms that "the incarnation proves that the relation of fatherhood and sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, may be communicated to a creature, and shared in by a creature." "For, in fact, the incarnation shows this relation actually communicated to humanity, and shared in by humanity, in the person of the Man Christ Jesus." \*

Afterwards he says, "In Christ we have the divine Son retaining His sonship in His assumed humanity. In the believer we have a human being divinely united to Christ by the Divine Spirit, in the exercise of a divinely-originated faith. And He is thus united to Christ as the Divine Son, retaining His sonship in His assumed humanity." †

Again, when prosecuting the illustration of his subject, he puts the cases of two sons, born to the same parent with a long interval between them, and of a son who marries, and whose wife thus becomes the father's daughter; and he affirms that the relation sustained in these cases, by the several parties to their common father, is the same.‡ Although the younger son, and the daughter by wedlock, could have no knowledge or experience of the paternal and filial intercourse which had taken place prior to the birth of the one and the marriage of the other,—this, he argues, does not make them less truly the children of the common parent than those who were his children before them. Nor does it affect the identity of the relation that its pre-existence in the case of those who first sustained it, be stretched back indefinitely, even to eternity.

"There is a tendency," he says, "to suppose that there is a difference of relationship, when, in point of fact, the difference merely lies in the dates at which, and the grounds on which, the same relation has been constituted in different persons. In other words, the

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 75.

† Ibid., p. 83.

‡ Ibid., p. 170-172.

difference has been held to be essential, whereas it is in reality only circumstantial, and should accordingly be treated as such." \* "There need be no difficulty in conceiving of two persons standing in the same relation to a third, even though, in the case of the one, the relation may be dateless, and founded on a necessity of nature ; while, in the case of the other, it may be of recent date, and founded or constituted by an act or work of grace." †

Again he says, "I have been pleading for the identity of the relation as common to the Son and to those who are His. I have admitted, no doubt, these two qualifications: First, that He has filial consciousnesses and experiences in the past eternity which they cannot have ; and, secondly, that their power of apprehending and appreciating all that the relation involves must be immeasurably less than His. This last qualification, I would say in passing, must be a continually decreasing one, as the years roll on of the eternity that is to come. For all along the line of its endless ages they will be 'growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.' With these qualifications, however, I have been maintaining that the relation is the same ; that it is, in their case, substantially identical with what it is in His." ‡

Yet farther, when speaking of the manner in which believers enter into this relation, he says, "John's design is, to represent our being sons of God as connected very closely with our regeneration ; and connected, too, after the very same manner that a man's being the son of his earthly parent is connected with his generation in time ; or, what I apprehend was more in John's mind, after the very same manner that the Lord's being the Son of His heavenly Father is connected with His generation from eternity. If so, then that makes sonship not merely a relation of adoption, but, in a real and important sense, a natural relation also. The adopted sons are sons by nature, and that too, I am persuaded, in a very literal acceptance of the term." §

The import of these passages is too plain to be misapprehended. They evidently affirm that all sincere believers have substantially the same relationship to God with that of His Only-begotten and Eternal Son, or that, with some exceptions or reservations, which are represented as merely accessory

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 173.

† Ibid., p. 177.

‡ Ibid., p. 209, 210.

§ Ibid., p. 233, 234.

and unessential, their Sonship is identically the same with His.

With respect, however, to these reservations, there is one of them which seems to me to be by no means of that "circumstantial" character which is ascribed to it; but, on the contrary, to be so radical and essential as utterly to subvert the alleged identity of the relations which the Lord Jesus and His people respectively sustain towards their heavenly Father. "It is supposed," we are told, "that there is a difference of relationship, when, in point of fact, the difference merely lies in the dates at which, and *the grounds on which*, the same relation has been constituted in different persons. In other words, the difference has been held to be essential, whereas it is in reality only circumstantial."

Now, as regards "the date at which the relation has been constituted," I admit that the difference *may* be held to be circumstantial; but *not so* assuredly as regards *the grounds on which the relation rests*. If anything can be deemed essential about a relation, it must surely be the ground on which it is constituted. The Semi-arians and their opponents did not deem it unessential to the relation of the second person of the Godhead to the first, whether he were eternally begotten of the Father by *a necessity of nature*, or by *the Father's will*. Yet here is an ingenious writer maintaining that "two persons may stand in the same relation to a third," with no difference but what is purely circumstantial, "although in the case of the one the relation be dateless, and *founded on a necessity of nature*; while in the case of the other it may be of recent date, and *formed or constituted by an act or work of grace!*" I cannot help thinking that such an assertion is unreasonable. Take as a test of it the filial relation among mankind. It will scarcely be affirmed that this relation is essentially the same in the case of one who is a son by natural descent, as in that of a son by marriage or by adoption. For there are some things pertaining to the former, of more than a merely accessory character, which cannot at all be attributed to the latter; community of blood, for instance, conformity of



features, similarity of physical constitution, and, it may be, congeniality of temper and disposition, to say nothing of the strong and warm instincts of natural affection. There may be many respects in which the relations agree. You may say that they are *analogous*. You may even say they are *equivalent*. You may say that to all legal effects, and to all social purposes, they stand upon the same footing. But still you cannot say that in substance they are *identical*. It would be repugnant to all our ordinary modes of speaking and of judging so to represent them. Now if this be the case with the filial relation with respect to man, much more must it be so with the filial relation with respect to God. Words cannot express the immensity of the difference between a *divine* sonship springing from a necessity of nature, and one that is "constituted by an act or work of grace." The author against whose views we are contending, makes as to this point a remarkable concession, when the exigencies of his theory seem to have been for a while forgotten. For, when speaking of the human analogy of father and son as applied to the first and second persons of the Godhead, he says, that "when due allowance is made for the necessary defectiveness of every earthly similitude of what is heavenly, this human analogy serves a most important purpose. It brings out, for one thing, the idea of entire sameness of nature. *The begotten Son of a Divine Father must be Himself essentially divine*—just as the begotten son of a human father is himself essentially human. The Son of God must Himself be as really God as a man's son is himself man."\* Here we can fully and heartily concur with him; but what, then, are we to think of his other statement, formerly quoted, in which he affirms that "our being sons of God is connected very closely with our regeneration, and that, too, *after the very same manner that the Lord's being the Son of His heavenly Father is connected with His generation* from eternity; so that the sonship of believers is not merely a relation of adoption, but in a real and important sense a natural relation also;" and "the adopted sons are

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 213.



sons by nature, and that, too, in a *very literal acceptation* of the term!"\* These statements are palpably at variance with one another. And we can, I think, have no hesitation in adhering to the former while we utterly reject the latter. Assuredly the Eternal and Only-begotten Son of God must, as such, be essentially divine. *His* sonship must be regarded as something which is absolutely *unique* and *unapproachable* by any creature. And though the sonship conferred upon His people may be in some respects strikingly analogous to it, yet in other respects the distance between them is so immeasurable that we dare not speak of them as substantially the same.

The justice of this conclusion will be more apparent if we now endeavour shortly to follow the course of argument by which an attempt is made to establish the opposite position.

In doing so, it is not necessary to enter at any length into the discussion of that high mystery of the *Eternal Sonship* of the second person of the Godhead. Suffice it to say, that we humbly acquiesce in the wellnigh universal persuasion of the whole Christian Church regarding this subject—namely, that our Redeemer is styled in Scripture "the Son of God" in virtue of His eternal relation to His heavenly Father—that the scriptural use of this title cannot be explained by a reference to His miraculous conception, His Messianic office, or His resurrection from the dead; but that, apart from all these, there are prior grounds on which this distinctive appellation is assigned to Him in respect of His peculiar properties or relations as one of the three mysterious persons of the Godhead.

In thus adhering, however, to the common faith of Christendom respecting the eternal sonship of our Immanuel, we may reasonably decline in any way to involve ourselves in those abstruse and subtle speculations which have been hazarded concerning His original derivation from the Father, or His exact mode of personal subsistence. These are matters as to

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 233.

which I cannot conceive that the title "Only-begotten Son of God" is designed to give us any definite information. Such a title does, indeed, indicate a relation *analogous* to the filial relation among men. But inasmuch as the human relation subsists between two separate beings, each possessed of a distinct bodily organism, while in the Godhead it is an *interior relation*, subsisting in one and the same indivisible spiritual substance, I agree with Dr Dick in thinking that "the one can throw but little if any light upon the other; and that the attempt to illustrate the one by the other is equally illogical and presumptuous."\* To the same effect is the judicious statement of Principal Hill, that "although the word *generation* be applied to the Son of God, we must be sensible that the manner in which He derived His origin (so to speak) from the Father, cannot bear any analogy to the proper meaning of this word; and that all attempts to explain the manner of this derivation must be in the highest degree presumptuous and unprofitable."†

The truth is, that such phrases are only to be considered as anthropomorphic expressions, used to convey to us somewhat of a faint or approximate conception of that which in its real nature is necessarily incognisable by us—namely, the manner in which those divine subsistences, severally denominated the Father and the Son, are related to one another as co-existing in the Godhead. The utmost conclusion we seem warranted to draw from the phraseology of Scripture respecting these two persons is, that there subsists between them a unity of nature, a conformity of character, an intimacy of fellowship, an intensity of affection—and, it may be allowed also, an ineffable communication of somewhat pertaining to the mysteries of the Godhead, to which we can hardly venture to assign a name—of all which the paternal and filial relation among mankind affords, though inadequately, our most appropriate human analogy. We cannot safely venture to attach any more precise or definite meaning to the expressions. To

\* Dick's 'Lectures,' vol. ii. p. 71.

† Hill's 'Lectures,' vol. ii. p. 287.

understand them in anything like a literal sense—as if they were meant to specify *the very manner* in which the divine persons are mutually related, or to give any definite description of the process whereby the one is “derived from the other”—would be to push the expressions quite beyond their legitimate import, or to carry the human analogy much farther than the nature of the case to which it is applied will at all admit of.

Assuming, then, with these necessary explanations, the truth of the doctrine of our Lord’s eternal sonship, we are now prepared to review the line of argument by which it is attempted to be shown that the relation implied in this sonship is identical, in all substantial points, with that which is sustained by believers when they become “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

The foundation of the argument is laid in the incarnation, or the union of the divine with the human nature in the person of Christ. From this great fact the four following propositions are affirmed to be legitimate deductions:—

1st, “That the relation of fatherhood and sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, is capable of being communicated to a creature.”

2dly, “That when so communicated, it may subsist in entire consistency with another relation, that of *subjectship*.”

3dly, “That it may thus be harmonised with the relation of subjectship, even after the latter has sustained a great shock—a fatal jar, as it might seem—whereby it has become thoroughly disordered and deranged.”

And, 4thly, “That while the incarnation thus brings the Son into the relation of a subject, under the inevitable condition of criminality and condemnation now attaching to that relation in our case, it proves that the relation itself, apart from that condition, may be one in spirit with that of sonship; and it secures that, as regards all who are in Christ, it shall ultimately be so, and that for ever.”

Of these propositions *the last three* must be regarded as mere corollaries or inferences from *the first*. And the main point



under discussion is not materially affected by them. The first proposition is the key of the whole position; and therefore we must attend with especial care to the grounds on which it is attempted to be established.

“The incarnation,” we are told, “discovers the communicableness of the relation of fatherhood and sonship as it exists in the Godhead. It proves that it is a relation which may be communicated to a creature, and shared in by a creature.” “For in fact the incarnation shows this relation actually communicated to humanity, and shared in by humanity, in the person of the man Christ Jesus. For the man Christ Jesus is the Son of God, in respect of His human nature as well as his divine. He is, as He goes about on earth doing good, the Son of God, in the very same sense, in the very same fulness of blessed significancy, in which He is the Son of God as dwelling in the Father’s bosom from everlasting.

“Let it be ever remembered that, though possessed of two natures, Jesus Christ, come in the flesh, is one person—one individual person—as truly and literally so as I am, or any one of you is. It is the one person, the man Christ Jesus, who is, from and after the incarnation, the Son of God. There are not two sonships belonging to Him, but only one. For the relation of sonship, being strictly personal, must be one, as the person is one. There are not, there cannot be, two distinct relations of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between God and the Incarnate Word—the one proper to His divine, the other to His human nature. The sonship of the one person cannot be conceived of as thus divided. It has, and must have, the character or quality of perfect unity. Again, it is to be remarked that the original and eternal relation in which the first person in the Godhead stands to the second, as His uncreated only-begotten Son, cannot be conceived of as altered or modified by that Son’s becoming incarnate—by His taking into personal union with Himself the nature of the creature man. His proper personality is not thereby affected; nor the relation between it and that of the Father. He continues to be the Son of the Father in the very same sense exactly in which He has been the Son of the Father from everlasting. Any other imagination would make that divine relation mutable in time, and not, as in His case it must be held to be, necessary and eternal.”

“From all this it clearly follows that in the one undivided person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, humanity



enters into that very relation of sonship which, before His coming in the flesh, He sustains to the Father. From thenceforth fatherhood is a relation in which the supreme God stands, not merely to a divine, but now also to a human being—to one who is as truly man as he is God.

“This is not, let it be carefully observed, making man to be as God—confounding the two natures in Christ, and ascribing to the one what can only be truly predicated of the other. It is not implied in the view which I have been giving that there is any communication of any divine property or attribute—any quality or perfection of the divine nature to the human nature in the man Christ Jesus. The question is not a question about nature at all ; it is simply and exclusively a question about relationship. The two natures being distinct, and continuing to be distinct, may nevertheless, if united in one person, be embraced in one personal relationship. As God and man in two distinct natures, the Incarnate Son is one person, standing in the one personal relation of sonship to the Father.”\*

Such is the statement of the argument in its author's words. And I venture to think that there are several very apparent fallacies contained in it.

1. In the first place, even allowing that the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, was communicated to humanity in the person of our Immanuel, this would only prove that relation to be communicable *under precisely similar conditions* to those under which humanity subsisted in that adorable Person.

Again and again is the fact insisted upon, as one of the main grounds of the argument, that “the Incarnate Son is one undivided person.” And from this it is held “clearly to follow that in the one person of Jesus Christ humanity enters into that very relation of sonship which, before His coming in the flesh, He sustained to the Father.” Unless, therefore, a like personal union can be pleaded in the case of those to whom it is affirmed that “the sonship, as existing in the Godhead, may be communicated,” no inference can be drawn in favour of that relation being so communicated from the fact of the incarnation. A mere “mystical union,” constituted by

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 75-78.

faith in Christ, comes far short, in this respect, of a personal union. Unless we suppose the personality of the believer to be somehow absorbed in the personality of the Son of God, to whom he is united by faith, the above argument, founded on the fact of the incarnation, to show that the very sonship of the Only-begotten may be shared in by him, is altogether inconclusive.

The author himself says, "It is admitted, or rather asserted, that the relation of the Incarnate Son is a personal one; and, consequently, that *the mere fact of the incarnation does not of itself prove its communicableness to other persons*. It is, in His case, a relation retained by the divine person in the new human nature assumed by Him. The new human nature communicates in the sonship by entering into the person. But this shows, at least, that human nature, as such, has nothing in it or about it which should preclude, in certain circumstances, the being and exercise of sonship in that nature."\*

I object to the vague expression, "in certain circumstances," in this conclusion, as capable of embracing more than is justified by the assumed premises from which the conclusion is deduced. We must substitute for it the phrase, "in similar circumstances," in order to render the inference a legitimate one. But *then*, I need scarcely say, it will not serve the author's purpose, because the circumstances under which the sonship of the Only-begotten is assumed to have been communicated to humanity are altogether exceptional and unparalleled.

2. In the second place, it is inaccurate to say that, in the Incarnate Son, "humanity enters into that very relation of sonship which, before His coming in the flesh, He sustained to the Father;" and that "from thenceforth God stands in the relation of fatherhood, not merely to a divine, but now also to a human being."

It must be remembered that the "humanity" of our Lord is not to be regarded as in itself "a human being" or person; and it cannot, therefore, with propriety be spoken of as "entering into the relation of sonship," which can be sustained only by a

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 82, 83.

person. This seems to be admitted by the author himself in the sequel of his treatise, when meeting an allegation that "the Holy Ghost is the father of our Lord's humanity, as being the agent in its production." "Not so," he replies, "*for there cannot be a father of a nature, but only of a person.* Our Lord's human nature never had any proper personality of its own—it was assumed by Him into His personality as the Son. What the Holy Ghost had to do was to provide that it (the humanity) should be such as the Son could thus assume, without derogation from His sonship."\* According to these statements, the effect of the miraculous conception was to qualify our Lord's humanity, not for entering into the monogenetic sonship which, as a divine person, He sustained, but for being assumed by Him into union with His divine nature, without derogation from His monogenetic sonship. And this, it must be owned, is much nearer to the truth than the author's previously affirmed theory which we are now discussing. The "hypostatical union" was constituted, not by the communication of the divine nature, with the attributes and relations proper to the possessor of it, *to a previously existing human person*, but, on the contrary, by the assumption of the human nature, with the attributes and relations proper to the possessors of it, by *a previously existing divine person*. Instead, therefore, of saying that by virtue of the incarnation a human being enters into the very relation of the Only-begotten to the Father, we ought rather to say that, by virtue of the incarnation, the Only-begotten, in respect of His assumed humanity, enters into the relations of man to God. The incarnation *per se* is not the communication of anything divine to a human being, but rather the assumption of everything human, sin alone excepted, into personal union with a divine being.

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 218, 219. In his *Third edition*, p. 41, *Note*, he makes the following statement: "I see no intelligible sense in which a *nature* can be said to have relations; for surely relations are of a *person*, though they may be founded on, or held in virtue of, the properties of the nature of a person. Hence, though the grounds of Christ's relations to God lie in one or other of His natures, yet the relations themselves are purely personal."



3. In the third place, we do not admit it to be the fact, that "the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, was communicated to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ," or that the God-man "can be held to be the Son of God, in the sense in which the Eternal Word was so, *in respect of His human nature*, as well as of His divine nature." To say so would, I conceive, be nothing short of confounding the two natures in Christ, or attributing to the one what is proper and peculiar to the other.

It avails nothing to affirm, that "ascribing the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, to Christ's human nature, does not imply the communication to it of any divine property or attribute;" and that "the question is not one about nature at all, but simply and exclusively a question about relationship." For it is quite impossible to separate the subsistence of a relation from *the ground* on which that relation subsists, and in respect of which it specifically differs from other relations. To speak of the created human nature of Jesus Christ as sharing in His original relation to the Father, as the *Only-begotten*, while confessedly it does not, and cannot, share in the *μονογενεσία* on which that relation is founded, appears to me to be no less unsound in logic than it is indefensible in theology.

And here I may observe, that when the author to whom I refer proceeds to discuss the *second inference*, which he holds to be deducible from the Incarnation, regarding the union of the relation of sonship with that of subjectship, there is a remarkable change in his mode of expression. For, whereas he had previously said, with reference to the sonship, that "Christ is the Son of God, in respect of His human nature, as well as of His divine nature," and that "in the one undivided person of Jesus Christ, humanity enters into that very relation of sonship which, before His coming in the flesh, He sustained to the Father;" a very different statement is now made regarding the *subjectship*. The statement now is, that "the problem of combining the two relations of sonship and subjectship is solved by the union of the two natures, the uncreated Godhead and the created manhood, in Jesus Christ as come in the

flesh. *In virtue of the one nature, He is the Son; in virtue of the other nature, He is a subject and a servant.* And being one person, combining in Himself both natures, He is at once both Son and subject.” \*

Here is a representation of the matter which is very different from what was formerly given. It is not here said that “*Divinity* enters into that very relation of subjectship which is proper to created humanity.” Nor is it said that the God-man “is a subject and a servant *in respect of His divine nature* as well as of His human nature.” The “undivided person, who combines in Himself both natures,” is indeed said, and justly said, to be “at once both Son and subject;” but the properties and relations of His two natures are carefully distinguished by affirming that “in virtue of the one nature He is the Son, while in virtue of the other nature He is a subject.”

But why should this change of statement have been adopted? If the principle laid down in the previous part of the argument be a sound one—namely, that by reason of the undivided unity of the Saviour’s person the relations of His divine nature are communicated to His humanity,—it seems unavoidable to conclude that on the same principle the relations of His humanity must be communicated to His divine nature.

The truth is, however, that neither conclusion is legitimate—or rather I ought to say, that the assumed principle which would lead to both conclusions, if it led to either, is inadmissible. The doctrine of Holy Scripture, as generally received by almost all sections of the Christian Church respecting this mysterious subject, may be thus expressed in the words of our Confession of Faith, that “Two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in the one person of Jesus Christ, without conversion, composition, or confusion.” And it is evidently inconsistent with this doctrine to suppose that the essential properties of the one nature, or its characteristic relations as founded on these properties, are by virtue of the personal union imparted to the other nature.

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 86.

There is, indeed, a peculiar mode of expression observable in several passages of the New Testament, which may appear at first sight to lend some countenance to the idea of a communication of properties from the one nature to the other. This usage is thus referred to in our Confession of Faith: "Christ in the work of mediation acteth according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; *yet by reason of the unity of His person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.*" In other words, Christ is sometimes named by some of His divine titles when the things ascribed to Him are human, and sometimes He is named by some of His human titles when the things ascribed to Him are divine. Thus in one passage where Christ is called "*the Son of Man*" He is said to have "*come down from heaven,*"\* which, of course, He only did as regards His divine nature. And in another passage where He is called "the Lord of glory," we read that He was "crucified,"† — a statement which, as is equally clear, can only be applied to Him as regards His human nature. This phraseology, however, which is of rare occurrence, does not imply that there was any real transference of the properties of the one nature to the other, but simply that all of them, being properties of the one person to whom both natures belong, are attributable to Him, whether the name used to designate Him be taken from His divine or from His human appellatives.

I may refer in illustration of this matter to the following highly judicious remarks of Dr Cunningham. After quoting the statement already referred to from our Confession of Faith, "that by reason of the unity of Christ's person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature," Dr Cunningham observes:—

"This statement is a mere assertion of a fact in regard to a certain scriptural usage of language, and its accuracy is proved by such texts as this, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down

\* John iii. 13.

† 1 Cor. ii. 8.



His life for us.' Dying is, of course, proper to the human nature, yet it is here attributed to God—the person denominated by the divine nature; and the ground or reason of the attribution is, that that person who laid down His life, and did so as man, was also God. The Confession, in making this statement, merely notices a fact, or points out an actual scriptural usage of language, but is not to be understood as laying down any general principle by which *we* may be guided in our use of language. We ought to make no such attributions of what is proper to one nature to the person denominated by the other, except only when the Scripture has gone before us and sanctioned it. Some persons, upon the ground that instances of this usage of language occur in Scripture, have thought themselves warranted to indulge in minute and elaborate attributions of what was proper to the one nature to the person denominated by the other, and thus to form an elaborate series of startling and, *prima facie*, contradictory or irreconcilable positions—declaring of Christ's human nature, or at least of Christ as man, what was true only of the divine, or of Christ as God, and *vice versa*,—a practice which I cannot but regard as inconsistent with the awe and reverence with which the great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh—ought ever to be contemplated.

“The position in the Confession of Faith—a mere statement of fact in regard to an occasional scriptural usage of language—must also be carefully distinguished from a doctrine which *sounds* very like it, and which has been strenuously maintained by Lutheran divines as the ground of *their* tenet concerning the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's body, as it is called, which they are accustomed to adduce in defence of their view of the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. The Lutheran doctrine is, that what is proper to one nature may be attributed, not as our Confession says to the *person* denominated by the other nature, or described by a name taken from the other nature, *but to the other nature itself*: and, more particularly, that the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's divine nature may be attributed, because it really belongs or has been communicated to His human nature—nay, to His body or flesh. It is quite unnecessary to expose this absurd and monstrous doctrine—it is enough to point out that, though resembling in sound the statement contained in our Confession of Faith, it is essentially different in nature and import, and in the authority on which it rests.” \*

\* Cunningham's 'Historic Theology,' vol. i. p. 318, 319.

On the whole, there seems to be no reasonable or scriptural evidence for the assertion that “the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, was communicated to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ;” and, consequently, no ground for the inference thence deduced, that the communicableness of this relation, as it exists in the Godhead, to ordinary human beings, is established by the fact of the Incarnation.

It is with peculiar satisfaction that I appeal, in confirmation of this conclusion, to the sentiments expressed by the late Dr Kidd of Aberdeen, in his ‘Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ’—a work which the author of the theory under discussion has spoken of in terms of unqualified commendation, as “the very remarkable book of a very remarkable man.” \*

Speaking of the voice which came from heaven at our Lord’s baptism, Dr Kidd observes :—

“Was it our Lord’s human nature that God the Father proclaimed to be His Son, with whom He was well pleased? Surely not; because our Lord’s human nature never had subsistence by itself. . . . If our Lord be called the Son of God, He can only be so in that nature which possessed sonship, in the proper sense of the term. It must, therefore, be with respect to His divine nature that He was, and is, the Son of God. . . . To say that the voice addressed the human and divine natures in union as the Son, is to confound the relation of these natures to the Father, and to represent each as possessing the same related state to the Father, which is absurd.” †

Again, after speaking of God as the common Father of mankind, “on account of the relation in which He stands to them in their creation and preservation,” and as more especially the Father of His regenerated and adopted children, Dr Kidd explains that this manner of expression is, *in either case*, to be understood as merely figurative or analogical, inasmuch as men “are not possessors of the divine nature or essence; nor do they in that nature enjoy propinquity or relationship to God in the same mode of being.” And then he goes on to observe as follows :—

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 70.

† Kidd on the ‘Eternal Sonship of Christ,’ p. 57, 58.

“ But there is a mode in which God is Father, *different from any which we have mentioned*; and in which his relation, as Father, must be as *essentially different* as the difference of the essence in which it is predicated. It is affirmed that a person existing in the divine nature is Father to another who is Son. Both are affirmed to be divine, and to possess the nature and perfections of Godhead. The constitution of the nature of each Person causes the relation of Father and Son to be *infinitely different from the relation of the Father to the creatures*.” \*

To the same effect, he says, in another place, “ As our Lord terms God the Father—*πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ*—*His peculiar and proper Father* (John v. 18), in a manner in which He could be Father to none else, so the apostle (Rom. viii. 32) terms the Son *ἰδίον υἱόν*—*His own Son, the peculiar and proper Son of the Father*, in a sense in which none else could be the Son. All others are sons in consequence of their creation, or of a change of their moral principles. But the Son could not be so in consequence of either of these events, for He is *ἰδίος υἱός*,—that is, Son in a manner in which none else is so. Neither the creation of His human nature, nor any event occurring therein, could constitute Him Son.” †

It is satisfactory to find the conclusion we have arrived at, on this confessedly difficult subject, confirmed by so very competent an authority. It is proper to remark, however, that when stating as above, that Christ is the Son of God exclusively as regards His divine nature, Dr Kidd is referring only to our Lord's monogenetic sonship as the second Person in the Godhead. And his statements cannot be held as militating against the supposition, which I shall endeavour to establish in my next Lecture,—that Christ, being *very man* as well as very God, partook, as such, of all the attributes and relations which are proper to man as an intelligent and moral creature, including man's filial relation to the Father of Spirits, the existence of which Dr Kidd has fully recognised.

\* Kidd on the ‘Eternal Sonship of Christ,’ p. 299, 304.

† Ibid., p. 235.



## LECTURE VIII.

### THE SONSHIP OF BELIEVERS COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN.

(*Continued.*)

WHEN we read those statements respecting the union of divinity with humanity in the Saviour's person, which are set forth in the doctrinal standards of our own and of other Churches, such as "*that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion, which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ,*"—the thought is apt to arise, that surely in framing such statements the process of analysing and methodising revealed truths has been carried beyond its legitimate and proper bounds. The subject to which these statements refer may seem to be at once too sacred and too mysterious to be thus dealt with.

It ought to be remembered, however, in vindication of those ancient councils of the Church catholic, from which these expositions of the scriptural doctrine originally emanated, that they were not actuated, in issuing such statements, by any gratuitous desire on their own part to intermeddle with subjects of so transcendental a nature, but by the necessity under which they lay of testifying against certain rash and unwarranted theories, which appeared to themselves, and to the general mind of Christendom, to be utterly opposed to the doctrine of the Word of God. One speculative sect in ancient times maintained that the person of Christ consisted only of

the divine nature inhabiting, after the manner of a soul, His human body; another, that His body was a mere phantom or visionary appearance; a third, that His divine and His human nature were blended together, so as to form only one nature, of a mixed or composite kind, by their combination; a fourth, that the two natures were so distinct as to constitute two separate persons, though presenting outwardly but one *πρόσωπον* or bodily aspect. In these circumstances, no fault surely is to be found with those ancient councils of the Church, by which such rash speculations were condemned, in so far at least as the decrees of these councils were restricted to a *simple negation* of the views which they repudiated, without venturing to substitute any *positive* solution of the incomprehensible mystery in their room. We are naturally disposed, indeed, to feel that, on such a subject, a readiness simply to receive the teachings of Holy Scripture is the proper frame of mind for a Christian to maintain, instead of attempting any such minute analysis or logical definition, as would seem to imply a far more thorough comprehension of the subject than our faculties are able to reach. But, still, we ought to remember that such an attempt did not originate with the great body of orthodox believers, but was, on the contrary, forced upon them, in a manner, by the speculations of those who differed from them. And when it is further considered that the decisions of the ancient Church, as substantially embodied in our own Confession of Faith, as well as in the articles of other reformed Churches, are, as to this subject, altogether *negative*; and that no such thing as a positive explanation of the hypostatical union is contained in them; we can see no cause for bringing against them those charges of dogmatism and presumption with which they have sometimes been assailed. They do not intrude into things that are unrevealed, or affect a wisdom above that which is written. They simply apply to the dogmas which they negative, those statements of Scripture with which they hold them to be inconsistent. But, as regards the great fact of the Incarnation, they leave it precisely as they found it in the Word of God, without any attempt to divest it of that

mysteriousness in which, to the human mind, it ever must remain enveloped.

If these remarks supply any vindication of the creeds of our own and of other Churches, in so far as they relate to this unsearchable mystery, a similar apology may be offered for the course of argument which we have found it necessary to follow in the present discussion. I feel very strongly the unseemliness and apparent presumption of applying the ordinary methods of reasoning to a subject so unutterably sacred, and so far exceeding our powers of comprehension. I trust, however, that nothing more has been attempted—as assuredly nothing farther was intended—than simply to *negative*, with reference to this subject, a theory that seems to be at variance with the Word of God—namely, That the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, was communicated to humanity when the Son of God came in the flesh, and is thus proved to be communicable to creatures of the human race.

4. Before leaving this topic, there is a *fourth* fallacy in the argument we have hitherto been considering, on which it is still necessary to make a few remarks. I refer to the denial that Christ can be called “the Son of God by a right or title proper to His humanity as well as by a right or title proper to His divinity.”

“There are not two sonships,” we are told, “belonging to Christ, but only one; for the relation of sonship, being strictly personal, must be one, as the person is one. There are not, there cannot be, two distinct relations of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between God and the Incarnate Word, the one proper to His divine, the other to His human nature. The sonship of the one person cannot be conceived of as thus divided; it has, and must have, the character or quality of perfect unity.” “There is no need of any line being drawn, or of any distinction being made, between His sonship as God and His sonship as man, as if He sometimes spoke and acted in the character or capacity of God’s divine Son, and at other times in that of God’s human Son—as if he sometimes called God ‘Father’ by a right or title proper to His divinity, and at other times by a right or title belonging to His humanity. To conceive thus of Him



is really to break the unity of His person." "Whatever He says, as the Son, to the Father; whatever He asks, as the Son, of the Father; whatever He does, as the Son, for the Father—He says, and asks, and does, as 'the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,' the one Lord Jesus Christ." \*

Now, if there be any truth in this author's position, which in my first two Lectures I endeavoured to refute, *that men are in no real or proper sense the sons of God apart from the grace of evangelical adoption*; then, as a matter of course, there must be truth also in the above assertion, "that Christ cannot be called the Son of God by a right or title proper to His humanity, as well as by a right or title proper to His divinity." But if, as I venture to think, I have succeeded in showing that the former position is indefensible, and that the well-nigh universal opinion of Christendom in favour of the general paternity of God is well founded, then am I entitled to insist that, by necessary consequence, the affirmation now before us is equally indefensible.

For be it observed, that when the Eternal Word was made flesh, He became *very man* as well as *very God*; partaking, as such, of all the characteristic properties and relations of man, with the sole exception of what is sinful. And if, therefore, it be one of the properties or relations of man, as an intelligent and moral creature, formed after the divine image, and dependent on the divine care, *to be a son of God*, then must this human property or relation, as well as all others which do not involve anything sinful, be attributed, in respect of His human nature, to our Immanuel.

But here it is objected that "the sonship of the one person cannot be conceived of as thus divided: it has, and must have, the character or quality of perfect unity."

I answer that there is, properly speaking, no assertion of a "divided sonship." What we ascribe to Christ is, *two distinct relations to God*—one proper to His divine nature, and the other proper to His human nature. We apply to them both, indeed, the same human analogy of *sonship*, because we can

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 76, 78, 79.

find no better analogy to represent them. But we are not to be held on that account as affirming that they are *identical*. On the contrary, we believe them to be in many respects greatly dissimilar. The one is a divine, while the other is a human sonship. The one is constituted by generation from eternity ; the other by creation and providence in time. The one implies participation in the divine substance ; while the other implies only conformity to the divine image. The one Christ sustains as His exclusive and incommunicable prerogative, being emphatically “God’s *own* Son,” and “the *only-begotten* :” the other He sustains in common with ourselves as “the second Adam,” “the seed of the woman,” who behoved to be “made in all things like unto his brethren.” It is not, therefore, a “divided sonship” which we ascribe to Him ; but two distinct sonships, differing very materially, although, from the poverty of language, we are obliged to call them by the same name—two distinct sonships, without sustaining both of which the wonderful and mysterious constitution of His person, as at once very God and very man, would have been incomplete.

But again it is objected, that “by supposing Christ to sustain two sonships, we *break the unity of His person* ;” and that “the relation of sonship, being strictly personal, must be one, as the person is one.” This objection is partly met by the answer given to the previous one, that the two sonships, though called by the same name, are not identical. I may now add, however, that I see no sufficient reason, in the oneness of the Saviour’s person, for concluding that only one relation of a filial character can be ascribed to Him. I admit the *mysteriousness* of a twofold sonship as sustained by Him. But I hold that it is no farther and no otherwise mysterious than as His possessing a twofold nature is mysterious. Once allow that He is very God and very man in one person, and then you have no escape from the ascription to Him of all the properties and relations both of very God and of very man—albeit, from the analogy of the divine relations and properties to those which are human, the same name may be applied to them. We are all ready to denounce the old heresy of the

Monothelites, who held that the God-man *had only one will*. And yet, surely, there is no less difficulty in conceiving that one and the same person should be possessed of *two wills*, than that he should stand in two filial relations, the one proper to his divine and the other to his human nature. Nay more, we have our Lord's own authority for believing that there were some things which, as to His human nature, *He did not know*, while yet, as to His divine nature, He certainly knew all things! \* Here is a transcendent mystery involved in the hypostatical union, in comparison with which the twofold sonship of Christ ought not to occasion any serious embarrassment.

But, again, we are met with the suggestion of another difficulty, "which those who hold the original relation between God and His intelligent creatures to have been filial," are challenged to dispose of according to their view.

"When the Eternal Son became truly and thoroughly man, He became of course man, as sustaining that original filial relation to the Supreme. Is *that* His sonship since then, until now, and for ever? Has it come in the place of His own proper eternal sonship? Or are the two identical? What has become of that original filial relation, which is alleged to be the birthright of the intelligent creature man, in the man Christ Jesus? Is it lost? Or does it still attach to Him? If so, to what effect? Or is it absorbed and merged in the higher sonship? Then, does He not so far cease to be man? Is this not something like the heresy of His manhood being swallowed up in His divinity?" †

Had these questions been put by one who disbelieves the doctrine of the hypostatical union, with the view of showing that doctrine to be indefensible, it might have been necessary to give them an elaborate answer. But proceeding as they do from one who fully admits that the divine and the human natures were united and manifested in the person of our Saviour, it may suffice to say, that there is no difficulty connected with them, beyond what he, as well as we, must be

\* Mark xiii. 32.

† Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 104.



prepared to encounter. We grant that "when the Eternal Son became truly and thoroughly man, He became of course man, as sustaining the original filial relation of all men to God as His intelligent creatures." This sonship he still retains, although it is not His only sonship. It has neither come in place of His own proper eternal sonship, nor has this higher sonship absorbed or superseded it. Just as He continues to possess a human will in union with His divine will, and a limited human intellect, which was capable of "growing in wisdom," in union with the infinite wisdom and knowledge of the Godhead, so does He unite in the constitution of His mysterious person the relation of sonship which pertains to him as very man, with that higher relation of sonship which pertains to Him as the eternal and only-begotten son of God. There is here, beyond controversy, a great mystery of godliness. But the mystery lies in the personal union of the two natures. And this being once admitted, there is no other or further mystery in what is so evidently and necessarily implied in it, as the joint possession of all the properties and relations by which the divine and the human natures are characterised.

But yet once more we are met by the allegation, that—

In the case of "our Saviour there is no need of any line being drawn, or of any distinction being made, between His sonship as God and his sonship as man, as if He sometimes spoke and acted in the character or capacity of God's divine Son, and at other times in that of His human Son." "Whatever He says, as the Son, to the Father—whatever He asks, as the Son, of the Father—whatever He does, as the Son, for the Father,—He says, and asks, and does, as the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, the one Lord Jesus Christ." \*

Now, in so far as this statement merely affirms that all the sayings and doings of our Lord were said and done by that one person who is at once the man Christ Jesus and the Only-begotten of the Father, it conveys an obvious truth which no one is concerned to dispute. But when it further alleges, that there is no need of making a distinction between things

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 79.

which were spoken and done by this one person, at one time in the character or capacity of God's divine Son, and at other times in that of His human Son, I hold that we have good and sufficient reasons for dissenting from it. Christ was certainly speaking in His divine character or capacity when He said on one occasion, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" and on another occasion, "I and my Father are one;" inso-much that the Jews on both occasions "sought to kill Him for making Himself equal with God."\* And no less certainly must He be considered as speaking in His human character or capacity, when He says, "Of that day knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."†

The author himself, indeed, whose views we are controverting, makes, in the sequel of his Lectures, a distinction in regard to our Lord's method of calling God His Father, which is somewhat akin to the distinction I have just noticed, although he gives a very different explanation of it, and endeavours to draw from it a confirmation of his main position.

The distinction is this, that our Lord, when calling God His Father, has sometimes in view the relation between the Father and Him as it subsisted from everlasting before His incarnation; while at other times what He has in view is the same relation as it subsists now that He has become incarnate. "Of course," says the writer, "I hold that it is the same relation, unchanged and unmodified. *But it is now shared in by His humanity*, which it was not before. And this, so far, makes a difference, not in the nature of the relation, but, as it were, in the manner of its outgoings or outcomings in the person sustaining it."‡

In illustration of this distinction, he refers, on the one hand, to that solemn appeal of the Lord Jesus, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.

\* John v. 17, 18, x. 30.

† Mark xiii. 32.

‡ Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 167.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him:” \* While, on the other hand, he refers to the cry of agony, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” followed by the prayer of acquiescence, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.” †

In the former of these passages, we are told, the speaker “points far back in the past eternity to mutual counsels and infinite endearments, in which His manhood never had a share; while, in the latter, the language springs out of trial of which His manhood bears the brunt, and obedience of which His manhood must have the credit. The Father is the same to Him, and He is the same to the Father, on both occasions alike. The relation of fatherhood and sonship is the same. But He who sustains the relation of sonship has undergone a change of state. From being only God, He has become man.” “Is it not evident that now, when He speaks as the Son occupying the last of these two positions, He may be expected to use language proper on some occasions to His former condition, and on others to His present condition? He cannot but speak at some times as realising, even in His humiliation, what He has been to the Father and the Father to Him, from everlasting. And He cannot but speak at other times as realising what, in virtue of His humiliation, He is to the Father, and the Father to Him, now. But there is not on that account any difference in respect of the personal relation in which He stands to the Father. That is the same in both states.” ‡

In regard to this topic I have two observations to make.

*In the first place*, allowing that in the two classes of passages referred to, the sonship spoken of is that which exists in the Godhead, it is not necessary to bear out the distinction referred to, that *this sonship* should be held to have been “shared in by our Lord’s humanity, or communicated to His humanity,” when He became incarnate. All that He says and does, on the several occasions, may be accounted for by keeping in view

\* Mat. xi. 25-27.

† Mat. xxvi. 39, 42.

‡ Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 168, 169.



*the oneness of His person.* For it could not be otherwise than that one and the same person, constituted as the mysterious person of the Saviour admittedly was, should be differently affected by the thought of His divine sonship, when viewed as sustained by Him in two states so greatly differing, as that of His original indwelling in the Father's bosom and that of His subsequent humiliation on the earth. What may have been the views and feelings of the human mind and heart of our Immanuel, in the consciousness of a personal union with the divine nature, is indeed a matter far too sacred, as well as too profound, for us to pry into. But whatever they may have been, it is sufficient, surely, to refer them to the great fact of the union of the two natures in the Saviour's person, without supposing the humanity to have been deified by the actual communication to it of those properties and relations which are proper to the divinity.

*In the second place,* allowing still that in the two classes of passages it is the monogenetic sonship, or the sonship as it existed in the Godhead, that is alone referred to, we are not thence warranted to conclude that this was His only sonship, or that He did not participate, as the man Christ Jesus, in that human sonship which pertains to all men, as the intelligent and dependent children of God. And if it be asked, Where, exclusively of these passages, do you find any scriptural evidences that such a human relation of sonship was sustained by Him in union with His higher sonship to His heavenly Father? I answer that such scriptural evidence may be met with in all those passages which represent Him as *truly human*. For if He was *very man*, He must have been partaker of all the essential properties and relations of man, among which, as we have seen, the relation of sonship with respect to God, as his creator and preserver and benefactor, is included. But this is not all; I may still farther answer, that in the whole life and character of "the man Christ Jesus," and specially in His whole deportment towards God, we have the most perfect and beautiful manifestation of the filial relationship that could possibly be imagined. In this, as well as in other respects,

He is our second Adam—our pure and consummate model of humanity, such as it originally was, and such as it was meant to be, when it came in its primitive excellency from its Creator's hands, and reflected, as in a bright and spotless mirror, His adorable image. So much is this the case, that if farther proof were necessary, in addition to what was formerly adduced, to show that we are in reality the offspring of God, in whom we live and move and have our being, such farther proof might be abundantly supplied by "looking unto Jesus," in whom, as our great Exemplar of perfect humanity, we cannot fail to see an intimacy of fellowship with God, a closeness of conformity to Him, a fulness of trust in Him, a warmth of affection towards Him, a depth of veneration for Him, which warrant us to say that even in His human character, and apart from all higher relations, He truly was, in the same sense with Adam while yet unfallen, the Son of God.

These remarks appear to me sufficient to show the fallacy of the argument under review, in so far as it asserts that "there are not, and cannot be, two distinct relations of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between God and the Incarnate Word—the one proper to His divine and the other to His human nature."

It is not very clear, indeed, how this allegation, even were it made good, can be considered as lending any support to the position which it is held to corroborate. I confess my inability to see in what way the argument for the communication of the monogenetic sonship to our Lord's manhood would be at all strengthened by the consideration that there is no other sonship in which, if this were not communicated, His manhood could have participated. Suppose that it were admitted, for the sake of argument, "that Christ did not sustain any filial relation to the Father proper to His human nature," we are not thence surely to rush to the conclusion that, when He became incarnate, there must have been imparted to His humanity that relation of sonship, as the Only-begotten, which is proper and peculiar to His divine nature. The only sound conclusion which, on such an admission, could be drawn is, that the filial relation of the Saviour to His heavenly Father was sustained

by Him exclusively in respect of His divine nature ; and that, in respect of His human nature, He sustained only the humbler relation of a subject or a servant.

On the whole, then, I venture to say, that no sufficient arguments have been adduced in proof of the first and most important proposition alleged to be deducible from the fact of the incarnation ; namely, “that the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, was communicated to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, and that having been so, it is thereby shown to be communicable to creatures of the human race.”

In regard to the three other propositions which have been alleged by the same author already referred to, as deducible from the fact of the incarnation, a very few observations may suffice.

The *second proposition* is, that “the fact of the incarnation not only establishes the communicableness of the divine relation of sonship, but discovers also its entire consistency, when communicated, with another relation—that of *subjectship* to God as king or ruler. For, in the person of Christ, the two relations, while continuing distinct from one another, are yet found combined.”

I have already had occasion to remark a very striking change in the mode of expression which the author employs, when he passes from the relation of sonship to that of subjectship, as sustained by the Redeemer. Instead of saying that “Christ is a subject” (as he had formerly said that “Christ is the Son”), “in respect of His divine nature, as well as of His human nature,”—he now says that “in virtue of the one nature, Christ is the Son ; in virtue of the other nature, He is a subject ; and being one person, combining in Himself both natures, He is at once both Son and subject.”

This representation of the case is altogether unobjectionable, if by the sonship of Christ we understand that relation as it exists in the Godhead, for in this sense He is assuredly Son, in virtue only of His divine nature, while He is no less evidently a subject, in virtue only of His human nature.



After affirming, however, that the incarnation shows the possibility of one who is naturally the Son being also a subject and a servant, as all God's reasonable creatures are, the question is put, "Must it not be regarded as going far to demonstrate the converse also,—namely, that it is possible for those who are naturally subjects and servants to be sons, as He is—to enter somehow and to some extent into His relation to God as His Son, as He enters into their relation to God as His subjects and servants?"\*

To this question, with certain obvious qualifications, such as the nature of the case unavoidably suggests, we can have no difficulty in giving an affirmative answer. It is certainly possible for men to enter "somehow and to some extent" into the Redeemer's filial relation to God. But we can only suppose them so to do by sustaining a relation in some respects analogous to it, or by practically deriving, in consequence of their fellowship with Christ, certain privileges and benefits which would not have accrued to them if Christ had not stood in this relation to the Eternal Father. And surely *this* is sufficient honour for all the saints, without insisting on the "substantial identity of their sonship with that of the Only-begotten in the Godhead."

The *third proposition* held to be deducible from the fact of the incarnation, is, that "It not only brings the eternal Son into the relation of a subject, but brings Him into that relation after it has sustained a great shock—a fatal jar, as it might seem,—after it has become thoroughly disordered and deranged."

In affirming this proposition, the author assumes, in the meanwhile, "the reality, not so much of the substitution of the Son of God for us, as of His identification with us." His position seems to be, that the incarnation did *ipso facto* imply such identification. "The Son of God," he says, "in His incarnation, becomes one of us, one with us, as fallen creatures, guilty, corrupt, condemned. He shares with us the relation

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 88.

in which we stand to God as subjects, not in its original integrity, but as it is now disordered and deranged,"\* with guilt and condemnation, as the consequence of sin, attaching to it.

While maintaining this position, he holds, at the same time, that our Lord's manhood was free from every taint of sin; although it must be owned that, with reference to this subject, he uses language that is very far from doing justice to his own convictions. His words are:—

"I have always felt a difficulty in conceiving of the Holy Son of the Most High becoming man, altogether as man is now since the Fall, without qualification or reservation. It has always seemed to me to imply a derogation from His holiness." "And then, I have never been able to see how, if the human nature of the Son of God had in it anything of the blight or taint which the Fall has entailed on it as transmitted to us,—if, when He came into our world in human nature, He had any stain of sin, original or actual, He ever could have stood us in stead, as the Lamb of God offered for us without blemish and without spot." "I cannot, therefore, reconcile myself to the idea of His assuming the human nature in the corrupt condition, and under the personal liabilities, consequent upon the Fall. I hold His manhood to be what unfallen Adam's manhood was."†

It must be confessed that these are somewhat weak and hesitating expressions to be used by one who is negating what he himself regards, in common with almost all Christians, as a gross and fatal error. The fact, however, that he does negative this error is undeniable. And the question thence arises, How does this affect his position, that the incarnation *ipso facto* implies the identification of the Son of God with sinful men, or "His becoming one of us, and one with us, as fallen creatures"?

It is argued that this position is not at all affected by the sinlessness of our Lord's humanity, inasmuch as His sinless manhood "differs from ours, not in its essence, nor in anything necessary to identify human nature as human nature,

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 92.

† Ibid., p. 93-95.

but in the circumstance or accident of depravity and corruption attaching to it, or rather to those who inherit it.”\*

I am at a loss, however, to see the force of this argument. For it so happens that “the *circumstance* or *accident* of depravity and corruption attaching to human nature, as now inherited by us,” is the very thing that marks it out as *our* nature, as the nature which distinguishes us as “guilty, corrupt, and condemned.” And hence the mere fact of the Son of God assuming humanity, as it existed in Adam prior to the Fall, would not *per se* amount to the “*making Himself one of us and one with us, as fallen creatures.*” It is clear, then, that something else must be taken into account beyond the mere fact of the Redeemer’s incarnation. We must take into account those gracious stipulations into which He entered with His heavenly Father in behalf of sinners, and by which He did not so much *identify Himself with us*, as graciously undertake to *substitute Himself for us*. When this is done, but not otherwise, we can readily see how, without at all participating in our sinfulness—nay, for the very reason that He did not at all participate in it—He should have so entered into our relation to God, as subjects of His outraged authority and broken law, as to bear for us the penalty of transgression, and to earn for us the rewards of righteousness.

Viewed in this light, it is, doubtless, a transcendent mystery, that in the person of the man Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of the living God, the relation of sonship to God, which has been from everlasting His joy and glory in heaven, should for a time have coexisted with the relation of criminality and condemnation, under God’s righteous sentence, which is to be the misery of lost spirits in hell for ever! Justly is it observed, that “the meeting together of these two opposite relations in the incarnate Son of God, even for a moment, would have been an amazing thought; but much more so is it, when we consider that, however the full agony of the felt contrast between them may have been concentrated into one dark hour, He must have been conscious, throughout a whole

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 93.



lifetime, of their really meeting in Him.”\* And when we think of this, well may the question arise, what amount of dignity and blessedness can be too great to look for as the appropriate sequel of so astonishing a display of heavenly grace? Or to put the question in the language of inspiration, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”† Our expectation, however, of privileges and benefits, as flowing from this wonderful work of redeeming love, must be kept within the bounds of possibility. The “all things” we look for must not be held to include anything which it would be alike unreasonable to suppose that God should be willing to give, and that man as a creature should be able to partake of. That “we should receive the adoption of sons,” so as to sustain a relation to the eternal Father, *somewhat analogous* to that of His Only-begotten, is no incredible thing to be anticipated, as the fruit of His unparalleled grace, in condescending, while personally free from sin, to place Himself, otherwise, in our position as guilty creatures. But we dare not think of any standing we may thus occupy as “*substantially identical*” with His divine sonship. For, however great may be the dignities and honours which God’s adopted children may have in prospect, when ultimately “conformed to the image of the Son of God,” the distance must still be in many respects immeasurable between them and that adorably majestic Being who dwelt in the Father’s bosom from eternity as His *Own* and *Only* Son, in whom He was well pleased, and at whose name, as the now exalted, though still incarnate Saviour, “every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that He is Lord.”

The *fourth* inference held to be deducible from the fact of

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 96.

† Rom. viii. 31, 32.

the incarnation is, that “not only does the incarnation bring the Son into the relation of a subject, under the inevitable condition of criminality and condemnation now attaching to that relation in our case, but it proves that the relation itself, apart from that condition, may be one in spirit with that of sonship; and *it secures that, as regards all who are in Christ, it shall ultimately be so, and that for ever.*” \*

Now, as to the *former* part of this inference, we might fairly take exception to the terms in which it is expressed. The relation of a subject cannot with propriety be said to be “*one in spirit*” with that of sonship.” The meaning, however, probably is, that the two relations are capable of being united. And there can be no doubt that, *in the general case*, they are so. No such miracle as the incarnation was necessary to satisfy us that a subject of God might also be a child of God. But what is to be said *in the particular case* with which we have to do—that, namely, of the monogenetic sonship on the one hand, and the subjectship of creatures, such as we are, on the other hand? The incarnation certainly proves that these relations may be united—*whensoever the divine and the human natures are united*. It proves that a person, *so constituted as the Saviour was*, may be the only-begotten Son in respect of His divine nature, and a subject like ourselves in respect of His human nature. But no further conclusion can warrantably be drawn from it.

With respect, again, to the *latter part* of the inference,—if by “sonship” we understand *the sonship of the Only-begotten*,—I am at a loss to see on what ground it can be maintained. And, strange to say, the author himself has not made a single observation bearing on this topic, all that he says having reference exclusively to the perpetual union of the two relations in the person of Christ. Now, even were it admitted that “the incarnation proves that these relations *may be* united in all Christians,” we might reasonably demur to the conclusion, that “*it secures that they shall ultimately be united*”

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 97.

in all Christians, and that for ever." And if this really be the meaning which the author attaches to the somewhat vague terms in which he has expressed himself, we may set aside his inference as utterly unwarranted by the premises from which it is deduced.



## LECTURE IX.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AS REVEALED AND KNOWN BEFORE THE SAVIOUR'S ADVENT.

IN the two preceding Lectures I have endeavoured to show that there is no sufficient ground for the supposition that the relation of sonship, as it exists in the Godhead, was communicated to the human nature of our Lord when He became incarnate, still less for the inference that it is thus proved to be communicable to those human beings who, through Him, are admitted to the standing and privileges of God's adopted children.

Even if we should have failed in this attempt, we are not by any means shut up to the conclusion that the sonship of believers is substantially identical with that of the Only-begotten of the Father. For, be it remembered, a relation may be *communicable* without being *actually communicated* to believers. And though we were forced to admit the *possibility*, we might reasonably require farther proof of the *reality* of their participation in the same relationship which subsists between the first and the second persons in the Godhead.

On the other hand, if we have succeeded in our previous argument, we might fairly hold ourselves exempted from the discussion of those farther grounds on which it is attempted to prove, from a survey, on the one hand, of *the doctrine of the Old Testament*, and on the other hand of *the personal teaching of Jesus Christ*, "that the relation which God sustains to His Eternal Son is His only true and proper fatherhood, and that

it is only by partaking of that relation that angels and believing men become the sons of God."

These topics, however, are so interesting and so important, apart altogether from their alleged bearing on this particular theory of the divine Fatherhood, that it would be inexcusable to waive consideration of them. And therefore I purpose, in this Lecture, to inquire, *How far the paternity of God was revealed and known to the Ancient Church before our Saviour's Advent*, reserving for subsequent discussion our Lord's teaching in regard to it.

In entering on this topic, we must frankly admit that there is no such full, and frequent, and explicit recognition of God's paternal character to be found in the revelations of the Old Testament, as we meet with in the doctrine of our Lord and His apostles. Of the views of the patriarchs, prior to the time of Moses, with reference to this and to many other subjects, it is but a vague conclusion we are able to draw from the brief and cursory notices that are given of them in the sacred narrative. And under the Mosaic law it is unquestionable that the filial relation of the faithful to their heavenly Father was, to a considerable extent, overshadowed or obscured by the servile character of the Levitical dispensation, whereby, like children under tutors and governors, they were kept in comparative bondage until they should reach maturity.

Still there are not wanting indications that the divine Fatherhood was known to the enlightened and godly members of the ancient Church. And I am inclined to think that the views they entertained respecting their filial relation to God were not in any respect more indefinite or obscure than their views with regard to various other privileges, which are now clearly revealed as the portion of believers. For among the manifold "spiritual and heavenly blessings," with which under the dispensation of the Gospel we are now enriched, there is no apparent reason why *adoption* should be singled out as that one blessing of which, beyond all the others, they were incapable of forming any adequate conception.

It is affirmed, however, by the author before referred to, that

“the Fatherhood of God was not revealed to the ancient Church, either as a relation common to all His intelligent creatures, or as a relation especially pertaining to believers.” And it may be useful briefly to review the arguments by which he endeavours to support this affirmation.

1. His *first* argument is one which we have already had occasion to discuss—namely, “that there is not a hint of sonship in all that is said of Paradise or of man’s sin and fall there; nay, that what is revealed of God’s treatment of Adam in the Garden is palpably irreconcilable with the idea of anything like the paternal and filial relation subsisting between them.”\*

Referring to a former Lecture for a detailed answer to this argument, it may suffice for the present to observe, that Adam is expressly styled in Scripture “the son of God;” that he is said to have been “made in the image of God,”—a statement which implies not only intelligent subjection to the divine authority, but such a conformity at the same time to the divine character as tends to promote the most intimate and endearing fellowship, and to generate the fullest confidence and the warmest affection; that Adam, being thus a son of God as well as a subject, must be held by his disobedience to have sinned in both capacities, and that one of the peculiar aggravations of his offence was the lack of filial trust and dependence which he betrayed by it; that the special covenant made with him in Paradise—suspending, as it did, on an arbitrary test, not only his own destiny but that of his posterity—does not properly come within the analogy of the ordinary dealings of rulers with subjects any more than of parents with children; and, finally, that the hope of recovery held out to him in the very denunciation of his sentence was plainly indicative, not so much of the sternness of vindictive justice as of the tenderness of parental love.

2. The *second* argument under this head which claims our attention is, “that the expression ‘sons of God’ is used in the

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 127.



Hebrew Scriptures in a very vague and indefinite manner ;” “ that in many cases it is little more than an idiomatic way of distinguishing the godly from the ungodly ;” that “ in other cases it is evidently used in a vague analogical sense, as appropriate to any relation implying benefit on the one side and dependence on the other, with corresponding feelings of endearment on both sides ;” and that even in those passages in which the use of it seems to be “ most emphatically paternal,” as “ a ground of complaint or expostulation or entreaty, it is merely a rhetorical mode of speech,” and “ there is nothing in it like the assertion or implication of real and proper fatherhood and sonship, as a relation subsisting personally between God and the individual man.” \*

This argument is very much of the nature of a broad assertion, which might be well enough met by a counter-assertion, inasmuch as there is scarcely an attempt made to verify it by anything like a full or critical discussion of the several passages of Scripture to which it is applied.

Of the “ many instances ” in which the phrase “ sons of God ” is alleged to be “ little more than an idiomatic way of distinguishing the godly from the ungodly,” there is only one example referred to—namely, the brief allusion, in Genesis vi. 2, to the unhallowed intermarriages of “ the sons of God ” with “ the daughters of men.” I admit that but little weight can be attached to this passage as a proof that the divine Fatherhood was known in primitive times. The circumstance, however, that men of professed godliness should then have “ called themselves by the name of the Lord,” or assumed the designation of His “ sons,” may be not unreasonably held to indicate, on their part, a recognition of His fatherly relation to them, as well as a desire to distinguish themselves by claiming it from the masses of wicked men by whom they were surrounded.

Of those other uses of the phrase, “ in a vague analogical sense, as appropriate to any relation implying benefit on the one side and dependence on the other, with corresponding

\* Candlish on the ‘ Fatherhood of God,’ p. 129, 130.

mutual endearments," there is unfortunately no particular instance pointed out. Dealing with this part of the argument, however, as a general statement, which is probably meant to apply to all the passages, I may remark that a phrase may be "*analogical*" without being "*vaguely or indefinitely* analogical." From this, as well as from other passages in the volume to which I am referring, it seems to be held that there can be no *reality* in a so-called filial relation of man to God, if the use of the word "filial," as applied to it, be analogical. The truth is, however, that the great God can be represented to us in no other way than by similitudes and analogies taken from the various relations which men sustain to one another. It is only by analogy that we speak of Him under the title of a King or Ruler, as well as of a Father. It is only in the way of analogy that believers are said to be received into His family as adopted children. And it is only in the way of analogy that we understand the words Father and Son as applied to the first and second persons in the Godhead,—and not as implying that the relation between them is identically the same, and is constituted in exactly the same manner as that of an earthly parent to the child whom he has begotten. In all these cases the phrase employed is analogical. But still it expresses a *reality*; and of this reality we fully believe it to be the fittest and best expression which human language is able to supply.

In like manner, when in various passages of the Old Testament we find the relation of men, and especially of godly men, to the Almighty, represented as that of children to their Father, we admit that the representation is analogical. But not the less on that account do we hold that a real personal relationship is meant to be expressed by it. And when we are met with the assertion that "the analogy is a vague one," and that instead of specially indicating anything like paternity and sonship, it is "equally appropriate to any relation implying benefit on the one side and dependence on the other,"—we humbly venture to think that inspired men would not have employed, so often as they have done, this peculiarly striking

and touching analogy, unless there had been some *special* propriety and significancy in it—something more closely akin to the reality which they meant to denote, than in any other more general form of expression that might have occurred to them.

Farther, in regard to those passages of the Old Testament in which the ascription of the paternal character to the Almighty is made practically available in the way of personal appeal, whether for rebuke and remonstrance, or for comfort and encouragement, I cannot acquiesce in the cold and ruthless criticism which would rob these passages of all their rich significancy, and teach us to view them as “mere rhetorical modes of speech.”

How great an inducement was held out to the children of Israel to return to that gracious God whom they had forsaken, when they heard Him declaring, in the words of the prophet Hosea, “that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God”! \* How precious a source of consolation was it to penitent Ephraim, when ashamed and confounded because of his iniquities, to hear from the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah of the Lord’s fatherly yearnings over him as “His dear son, His pleasant child,” whom He “earnestly remembered still,” and on whom “He would surely have mercy”! † And how fully must it have contributed to the encouragement of the faithful members of the ancient Church, in the midst of all their trials and calamities, to be warranted, in the inspired language of Isaiah, to plead with the Lord for the renewal of His former mercies, saying, “Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting”! ‡

On the other hand, could anything be more tenderly pathetic than those words of remonstrance, as given by Jeremiah, in which the Almighty condescends to plead for the renewed affection and confidence of His people,—“Wilt thou not from

\* Hosea i. 10.

† Jer. xxxi. 20.

‡ Isa. lxiii. 16.



this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?"\* We are told, indeed, that in this passage there cannot be any allusion to the paternal relation, because in the context the persons addressed are represented under the image of one who has violated the conjugal vows. It ought to be considered, however, that the sacred writers are not always strictly scrupulous in avoiding a mixture of similitudes; and hence that the circumstance of the conjugal relation being referred to in the context of this passage, is no conclusive argument against the allusion being, as the words most plainly indicate, to the paternal relation in the passage itself.

There are other texts, however, of a like import, which are not liable to any such exception. For example, there is the earnest expostulation of Moses, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee?"† There is the solemn and mournful complaint of Isaiah, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."‡ And there is the pointed and pungent rebuke of Malachi: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear?"§ In all these passages the aggravating circumstance that is specially noted in the undutiful conduct of sinners is, that they are unworthily requiting their heavenly Father—that they are rebelling against Him whose children they are, and by whose parental care they have been nourished,—and that while acknowledging the just rights of a human parent, they are withholding from their divine Parent the honour that is His due. The existence of a filial relation is assumed as the groundwork of those filial duties which they are charged with neglecting. For it is very plain that they could not have been blamed for keeping back from the Father of their spirits the reverence, love, and obedience of dutiful children, if to act as

\* Jer. iii. 4.

† Deut. xxxii. 6.

‡ Isa. i. 2.

§ Mal. i. 6.

God's children were in no respect incumbent on them by virtue of any personal relation in which they stand to Him.\* To say that such appeals are "mere rhetorical modes of speech," and that there is "nothing like the assertion or implication in them of the divine fatherhood," is in effect to rob them of all their point and of all their emphasis.

In connection with these passages, it is proper to notice some others, in which God, without being expressly called the Father of His people, is represented as acting towards them a father's part. Thus Moses, when reminding the Israelites of their past afflictions, says to them, "Thou shalt consider in thine heart that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee."† Malachi describes God as saying of His faithful worshippers, "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."‡ David declares that "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."§ And Solomon assures us, that "Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."||

We are told, indeed, with respect to these four passages, that "the very nearness of their approach to the assertion of God's fatherhood makes the stopping short of it all the more noticeable."¶ But, in effect, there is no such stopping short. For if God, in His dealings with us, be thus fatherly—acting a father's part, and regarding us with a father's kindness—we are warranted to hold that His fatherhood is revealed to every intent or purpose that could be served by the revelation of it: inasmuch as there is no reason I can think of why we should be taught to regard God as our Father, except that we may be encouraged to look to Him for the treatment, and, in return, to render to Him the love and confidence of His dear children.

\* It is worthy of remark that in one of the above texts (Mal. i. 6) the *magisterial* and *parental* relations of God are *both* appealed to; so that if the one be set aside as a mere rhetorical figure with no real significancy, the other must, on the same ground, be set aside along with it.

† Deut. viii. 5.

‡ Mal. iii. 17.

§ Ps. ciii. 13.

|| Prov. iii. 12.

¶ Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 152.

In the last of the four passages, however, we are further told that the shortcoming of an assertion of fatherhood is "particularly significant."

"The verse from Proverbs is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And the inspired writer, in quoting it, does not scruple to throw it into New Testament form, for the purpose of his inspired New Testament appeal, saying, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' Fatherhood is in the text as Paul was inspired to give it. But it is not in the text as it stands in the Old Testament. All that is there is a similitude,—a 'like as,' or 'so as,' or 'even as.' " \*

It is somewhat unfortunate for this critical remark, that the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews happens to quote the verse *verbatim* from the Septuagint. Instead of "throwing it into a New Testament form," he gives it in the very form in which he found it in that ancient version of the Old Testament, which was drawn up considerably more than two centuries before the birth of Christ. But even if it had been thrown into this form by Paul himself, instead of being taken from the Septuagint, we should not in that case have said that he had perverted it, but rather that he had fully brought out its real meaning. And hence we should have been warranted to appeal to him as agreeing with us, that in this, and in the other three passages of the same class, in which God is represented as acting a fatherly part, He is in effect declared to be our Father in heaven.

We gladly avail ourselves, moreover, of the concession, that "*Fatherhood is in this text as Paul was inspired to give it.*" Had it stood *thus* in the Book of Proverbs, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," it would, in terms of this concession, have contained an assertion of the divine paternity, without any deduction on the score of "vague analogy," or "rhetorical forms of speech." If so, then we are surely entitled to hold that there is a like assertion of the divine paternity in those other seven passages of

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 152.



the Old Testament previously referred to, in which it is even more expressly and emphatically declared.

3. The *third* argument which falls to be noticed under this head, is one that may be easily disposed of. It is this,—that some of those passages of the Old Testament in which God is represented as a Father, have reference, not to individuals, but to the ancient Church or to the Jewish nation viewed collectively.\* Thus God sends an urgent message to Pharaoh in these words, “Israel is my son, even my first-born; let my son go, that he may serve me.”† And He gives this as His reason for bringing His people back from their captivity in Babylon, “For I am a Father unto Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.”‡ The Church or nation also appeals in like manner to the Lord, saying, “Now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we are all the work of Thy hand.”§

Now, admitting that in these instances the paternity is alleged to subsist between God and the collective Church or nation, no argument can be thence drawn against the subsistence of a similar relation between God and individuals, as expressly affirmed in other passages. Besides, it must be remembered that the Church or nation of Israel was only an aggregate of the individuals of whom it consisted. And the circumstance of the whole community being encouraged to put their trust in the fatherly care and love of God, could scarcely fail to generate, in all devout members of the community, a like spirit of childlike confidence and affection.

4. A *fourth* argument is stated in the following terms:—

“In marked contrast with those vague and indefinite modes of speech, which are pleaded for the sonship either of all men or of all believers, is the clear, exact, and unequivocal precision with which real and proper sonship is ascribed to one individual, and to one only. There is a Son of God revealed in the Old Testament. He

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 131.

† Ex. iv. 22, 23.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 9.

§ Isa. lxiv. 8.

is revealed as standing alone and apart. There is not much said of Him in that character, it is true; indeed there is very little. And nothing at all is said of the bearing of His sonship on others besides Himself. But a Son of God there is in the ancient Scriptures. And however rare may be the passages in which He appears, and however few the words in which He is described, His sonship is beyond all question not figurative, but true sonship. In the oracle which the 2d Psalm records, 'Thou art my son;' in the prediction of the 89th Psalm, 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father; . . . I will make Him my first-born;' and perhaps also in the song of triumph in the 9th chapter of Isaiah, 'Unto us a Son is given;' the sonship of a person is declared." "And the precision of the language which the Holy Spirit takes care shall be used, when the idea of true and proper personal fatherhood and sonship is to be expressed, affords a presumption that no such relation is really meant to be asserted, when the phraseology is of a looser and more indefinite kind." \*

In reply to this argument it may suffice to say, that we do not admit the alleged contrast on which it is founded. Of the very few passages referred to (only three in number), as attributing a divine sonship to the promised Saviour, there is one, contained in the 9th Chapter of Isaiah, which merely speaks of Him indefinitely as "a son" who is "given unto us," without expressly designating Him as the Son of God. Another, contained in the 89th Psalm, is so far from being remarkably pointed and unequivocal in its reference to the Messiah, that, on the contrary, it is plausibly held by some to be applicable to David or to Solomon, and only in a secondary sense to Christ as typified by them. And nothing is said in it that is more distinctly expressive of "true and proper fatherhood and sonship," than we find in other passages, which have reference either to Israel collectively, or to faithful members of the house of Israel. In regard to the third passage, contained in the 2d Psalm, I am indeed fully persuaded in my own mind that it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal and only-begotten Son of God. It cannot be denied, however, that many learned critics, and many able theologians, insist that the re-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 133, 134.

ference of these words is, not to the eternal generation of the Son of God, but to His miraculous birth when He became incarnate, or to His resurrection from the dead, by which He “was declared to be the Son of God with power.” And considering how great a diversity of opinion has always prevailed, and still prevails, respecting the application of this passage, I am somewhat astonished to find it characterised, along with the other two passages associated with it, as so greatly superior in clearness and precision to those texts which are appealed to in proof of the sonship either of all intelligent creatures or of godly men.

5. The only other argument that remains to be shortly noticed, as bearing on the present topic, is “The very remarkable absence of the filial element in the religious experiences and devotional utterances of the Old Testament saints.”

“The Psalms,” we are told, “entirely want this element.” And “in the recorded spiritual experiences and spiritual exercises of Old Testament believers, there is not anything like a full recognition—scarcely, indeed, any recognition at all—of that personal relation of fatherhood and sonship which enters so largely and so deeply into the prevailing spirit of Christian devotion.”\*

Nay, the ingenious author is not content with affirming that these ancient worthies, so long as they lived on earth, were almost, if not altogether, ignorant of the divine fatherhood; but he goes so far as to maintain that they continued ignorant of it, even when at death they were translated to the heavenly kingdom, until the Son of God was at length manifest in the flesh. In order to support this assertion, he refers first of all to Paul’s statement, in Heb. xi. 39, 40, respecting the saints of old, that “these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” And he infers that the “better thing” here referred to, was not merely the general blessing of clearer light and

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 151, 152.



fuller joy, consequent on the complete revelation of the Gospel plan through the actual coming of the long-promised Saviour, but "some particular benefit, precise and well defined, which really effects a change in their standing or position;" in short, that it was nothing else than the great privilege of sonship, which was necessary to the perfection of their spiritual state. He next appeals to the magnificent description of the heavenly world in an after part of the same epistle, where the apostle speaks of Christians as having "come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."\* He supposes that here "the church of the first-born" denotes the entire body of New Testament believers, who are so styled because they had "received the adoption of sons;" while "the spirits of just men made perfect" are, on the other hand, those Old Testament believers, who, not only while they lived, but after they died, were as yet imperfect, until, through the Saviour's incarnation, they were at length admitted to a footing of equality with "the church of the first-born," "sharing in their right of primogeniture, and becoming out-and-out sons of God, as they are."†

Now, without entering into any minute criticism of the two passages of Scripture here referred to, we may, I think, very reasonably demur to the extremely doubtful conclusion held to be deducible from them.

In regard to Hebrews xi. 39, 40, I observe (1), that the statement, "these all, having obtained a good report by faith, received not the promise," seems to refer to *the earthly state* of these ancient worthies. Paul was appealing to them as eminent examples of the power of faith. And with this view it was highly pertinent to notice the disadvantages of their earthly condition as compared with ours,—in respect that they had not received, as we have, the fulfilment of "the pro-

\* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

† Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 137-141.

mise" *par excellenc*,—that is to say, the great promise of the Messiah, with all the privileges and advantages accruing from it. On the other hand, there would have been no such pertinency in a reference to any supposed imperfection in *their heavenly state*; besides that this supposed imperfection was a matter of which those to whom the apostle was writing had no cognisance, and which, accordingly, could not be properly appealed to in the way of example.—(2), When God is said to have "provided some better thing for us," the meaning seems to be that He had provided for us, *in our earthly state*, something better than had been given to the ancient worthies *in their earthly state*. So far as I can see, it was foreign to the apostle's purpose to make any comparison between *the heavenly states* of the two parties. Nor, indeed, can it be said that, as regards the heavenly state, our portion is in any respect better than theirs. For, even if we suppose their happiness in heaven to have been incomplete before the death and resurrection of Christ, we must still admit that it became as complete *then* as the happiness of Christians who should die thereafter. And therefore, in so far as concerns the heavenly blessedness awaiting those who "die in the Lord," we have no advantage over them. From and after the period of the Saviour's resurrection, they have obtained this blessedness as fully as dying Christians, and have even had the precedence of dying Christians in the possession of it. It is true, they have still to wait for the resurrection of their bodies. But so also have Christians. In this, as in all other matters pertaining to the condition of the faithful after death, it cannot be said that God has provided any "better thing for us" than He has for them. Accordingly, we must look to the respective *earthly* states of the two parties in order to determine wherein *we* have the pre-eminence, and we must seek this pre-eminence in the greater measure of light and knowledge which God has been pleased in the Gospel to bestow on us, than on those of whom we are told that they desired to see the things which we see, but saw them not, and to hear the things which we hear, but heard them not.—(3), The clause, "that they

without us should not be made perfect," is allowed by all commentators to be extremely difficult. Probably it may be regarded as elliptical. The words "without us," or "apart from us," may be held as signifying "without communion or participation with us in the better thing which God had provided for us." For it must be remembered that this "better thing," which has now been actually conferred on us under the Gospel, was prophetically announced and symbolically represented as an object of faith to the Old Testament believers, and that the consummation of their blessedness was dependent on it. In this sense it may be truly said that the divine purpose in "providing some better thing for us" was "that they should not be made perfect" apart from their fellowship with us, as joint members of the Church of Christ, and joint partakers in the benefits of His mediation. This, however, does not imply that their perfection *was delayed* until the actual coming of the Saviour. For the mediation of Christ had a *retrospective* influence. It availed to secure the complete salvation of all believers, in ages before, as well as after His appearance.—(4), I may add that, even if this exceedingly difficult clause be held to refer to some imperfection in *the heavenly state* of those who died before the Saviour's advent, there is nothing either in the clause itself or in its context to indicate that this imperfection consisted in their *lack of a full filial standing with respect to God*. That it did so is a mere conjecture with nothing to support it, and nothing, so far as I can see, to recommend it, except that it favours the views of the author who has suggested it. With much greater plausibility might it be said that the imperfection of these departed saints consists in their disembodied condition, in which they must still remain until the general resurrection, when, "not without us,"—yea, not without all those who shall have died in the faith until the end of time, and those also who, remaining alive, shall not die, but shall be changed at Christ's second coming,—they shall at length have their perfect consummation of bliss, both in body and in soul, to all eternity.



In regard to the other passage, Heb. xii. 22, 23, I remark (1), That the two expressions here employed,—“the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven,” and “the spirits of just men made perfect,” are not to be understood as designating *the New Testament Church* and *the Old Testament Church* respectively, but rather as severally denoting *the Church on earth* and *the Church in heaven*. It is said of the former that “their *names are written* in heaven,” from which we may naturally conclude that they are not as yet there in person; whereas the latter are styled “the *spirits* of just men,” which evidently implies that they are “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” (2), We have not the least reason to suppose that these “spirits of just men” are here said to be “made perfect” by the removal of any previous defects *in their heavenly condition*. Rather must we suppose their “perfection” to have consisted in their deliverance from the sins and infirmities *of their earthly state*, and to have taken place when they first entered the celestial mansions. (3), The statement that these “spirits of just men” were “made perfect” by being for the first time admitted to the full privileges of *sonship*, is a mere assumption, for which there is not the least semblance of proof, so far as I can discover, either in this or in any other passage of Scripture.\*

Apart from the fanciful conjecture founded on these two passages, it seems to me that the broad statements before adduced, respecting “the absence of the filial element in Old Testament piety,” are not a little exaggerated.

There can be no doubt that the burdensome yoke of the Jewish law tended to repress the full development of the filial spirit in those who were subjected to it. To this Paul alludes when he thus writes to the Galatians, “Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.”† It must be observed, however, that the persons

\* See Note N.

† Gal. iv. 1-3.

who were in this condition of pupillage or comparative servitude, were all the while “sons and heirs” notwithstanding. And though in their circumstances we could scarcely expect of them the same full recognition of their sonship as belongs to us who are delivered from the bondage of the law, and brought into “the glorious liberty of the children of God;” yet, as has appeared from the passages already adduced, they were not by any means in ignorance of their filial standing. Indeed, the very writer against whom we are contending admits, respecting the godly among them, that “their close walk with God, their strong trust in Him, their fervent desire after Him, the warmth of their affection, the poignancy of their sense of sin, and the liveliness of their heavenly joy, must appear,—in the view of their being so ignorant of the divine fatherhood,—to be more and more wonderful the more we examine and reflect upon them.”\* And I may venture to add, that these features of their personal religion are so *distinctively filial* in their character as to show that they could not have been ignorant of the divine fatherhood. As for the assertion, that in the Book of Psalms “the filial element is entirely wanting,” there are few who will be disposed to acquiesce in it. For to say nothing of the representations of God that are there given, as “a Father of the fatherless,”† as “taking us up when our father and our mother forsake us,”‡ and as “pitying them that fear Him, like as a father pitieth his children;”§ it will not bear denial that the Psalms are characterised by a depth of spirituality, a warmth of devout affection, a confidence of faith, and an intimacy of fellowship with God, which few of the most matured and advanced Christians, even in the liveliest exercise of the spirit of adoption, are able to reach. If indeed there were any truth in the above assertion, it would be unaccountable that the Psalms should have been constantly used, in all the Churches of the New Testament, as the chief, if not the only, book of Christian praise.

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 153.

† Ps. lxxviii. 5.

‡ Ps. xxvii. 10.

§ Ps. ciii. 13.

The words of Calvin as to this subject are highly instructive. In his commentary on Gal. iv. 1-7 he observes :—

“ We learn from this passage that the fathers under the Old Testament had the same hope of the inheritance which we have at the present day, because they were partakers of the same adoption. According to the dreams of some fanatics, the fathers were divinely chosen merely for the purpose of prefiguring to us a people of God ; but Paul, on the contrary, teaches us that they were chosen in order to be together with us the children of God ; and particularly attests that to them, no less than to us, belonged the spiritual blessing promised to Abraham. Further, we learn that, notwithstanding their outward servitude, their consciences were still free. The hard bondage of the law did not hinder Moses and Daniel, the pious kings, priests, and prophets, and the whole company of believers, from being free in spirit. Though bearing the yoke of the law upon their shoulders, they nevertheless with a free spirit worshipped God. More particularly, having been instructed concerning the free pardon of sin, their consciences were delivered from the tyranny of sin and death. They held the same doctrine, were joined with us in the true unity of faith, placed reliance on one Mediator, called on God as their Father, and were led by the same Spirit. Hence it appears that the difference between us and these ancient fathers lies, not in substance, but in accidents or circumstantials.” “ When we look at the matchless faith of Abraham, and the vast intelligence of the holy prophets, with what face shall we dare to talk of such men as our inferiors ? Were they not rather the heroes and we the children ? ”

On the whole, then, there seems to be no sufficient evidence in proof of the statement I have ventured to controvert, “ That the fatherhood of God was not revealed to the ancient Church, either as a relation common to all mankind or as a relation specially pertaining to believers.” On the contrary, there are not wanting satisfactory indications that the divine fatherhood, both in its general and in its special aspects, was in some measure known to enlightened and pious men under the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations. No one, indeed, will venture to allege that they had any such full and lively apprehensions of it as those to which we are enabled to attain



through the marvellous light which now shines upon us under the Gospel; but still there is a sufficiency of proof to show that they were not altogether unacquainted with it. And, as I before observed, there is no reason for supposing that their views were in any respect more indefinite or obscure with reference to their filial relation to their Father in heaven, than with reference to many other spiritual privileges and heavenly blessings which are now more clearly and more fully brought to light.

## LECTURE X.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AS TAUGHT BY OUR LORD.

THE teaching of our Lord on the subject of the divine fatherhood stands, it must be acknowledged, in very striking contrast with that, not only of all the uninspired instructors, but of all the divinely-commissioned prophets who had gone before Him. We look in vain to the writings of the wisest and most profound philosophers of ancient times, or even to the sacred pages of the Old Testament, for any such clear and articulate proclamation, or any such full exposition of it, as He has given us. The plainness with which He states it, the frequency with which He speaks of it, the prominence which He claims for it, the manifold practical uses to which He applies it, are altogether peculiar to Himself, and may be regarded as constituting one of the most remarkable characteristics of His heavenly doctrine. Nor have we cause to wonder that this should be the case, when we bear in mind the grand purpose of His mission. Coming as He did on an errand of the richest mercy, to announce the glad tidings of salvation to our fallen race—and, what is more, coming as the only-begotten Son, whom God of His unspeakable love did not withhold, to purchase by His great sacrifice the salvation thus proclaimed by Him—it was nothing else than might have been reasonably looked for, that God should, in His teaching, be held forth as bearing to us that intimate and endearing relation of paternity, in which alone we could deem it no incredible thing that so wonderful a manifestation of His grace should

be conferred upon us. The broadest and fullest announcement of the divine fatherhood was certainly no more than a fit accompaniment of the declaration, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now, of our Lord's doctrine on this interesting subject, there is no part of the New Testament in which a clearer and fuller exposition is to be met with than in that beautiful discourse which is familiar to all Christians under the name of the Sermon on the Mount.

In referring to this discourse, we must remember that it was delivered, not exclusively to our Lord's disciples, but to "great multitudes of people that followed Him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan."\* We are told that, "*seeing the multitudes*, He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him, and He opened His mouth and taught them." From this statement we are warranted to suppose, that in delivering this discourse our Saviour had respect, not only to His professed and constant followers, but to the great crowd of auditors who thronged around Him. And this is further confirmed by what is stated at the close of the Sermon, from which it evidently appears that the multitude considered the instructions contained in it as addressed to themselves. For "it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."† Such being the case, it is reasonable to conclude that, whatever He says in the course of this Sermon respecting God as the Father of those whom He is addressing, must be so understood as to render it generally applicable, without any distinction or respect of persons, to all His hearers.

But even if this discourse had been intended for His disciples alone, it must be considered that *they* also were not as yet instructed in the great doctrines of His divine sonship and mediation, and could have no conception of anything peculiar

\* Mat. iv. 25, v. 1.

† Mat. vii. 28, 29.



in their filial relation to God as thence arising. The author whose new theory of the divine paternity we have been controverting, acknowledges that "he can see a reason for there being still some reserve in regard to the discovery of God's fatherhood and His people's sonship. Even the incarnate Son is not yet in a position to do full justice to the subject. He cannot yet unfold fully the substantial identity of the relation in which He and the disciples stand to God as Father,—not, at least, in its highest and fullest significancy."\* And in the preface to his second edition he further observes: "There is one point on which I am disposed to modify an opinion which I have expressed. It refers to the invocation in the Lord's Prayer, '*Our Father*.' I am inclined to admit that, inasmuch as the fellowship of the disciples with their Master in respect of sonship was not clearly revealed" [rather, *was not at all revealed*] "when He gave this form of invocation, He could not intend it then for Himself and them conjointly. The Son told His brethren to say '*Our Father*' before He fully told them" [rather, *before He told them at all*] "of His oneness with them and their oneness with Him in their saying so." The truth is, that of the doctrine of evangelical adoption, in anything like the sense in which it is now received among us, we have not the slightest reason to suppose that any intimation had yet been given to our Lord's disciples. And, accordingly, we are warranted to conclude that He could not and did not expect them to attach, to what He then said to them respecting the divine fatherhood, any further idea than of that general relation which the great Father of spirits sustains towards all mankind, or, at the utmost, of the recovery of this relation from the darkening and dislocating influences of the Fall, which, in common with all faithful Israelites, they might have anticipated from the promises of the Old Testament.

Observe, then, how He speaks to them, and to the surrounding multitude, of the light in which God was to be regarded by them.

He enjoins them to "let their light so shine before men,

\* Candlish on the '*Fatherhood of God*,' p. 186.

that men may see their good works, and glorify *their Father* which is in heaven.”\*

He requires them to “love their enemies and do good to them that hate them,” “that they may be the children of *their Father* which is in heaven ; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust ;” and adds, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as *your Father* which is in heaven is perfect.”†

He admonishes them to “take heed, that they do not their alms before men, to be seen of them ; otherwise they have no reward of *their Father* which is in heaven ;” but to let “their alms be in secret, and *their Father*, who seeth in secret, shall Himself reward them openly.”‡

He says to them, “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to *thy Father* which is in secret ; and *thy Father*, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly ; but when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,” “for *your Father* knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.”§

He instructs them to “pray after this manner, Our Father which art in heaven,”|| without any reference, in the form of prayer that follows, to the offering up of their petitions “in His name,” as enjoined at a much later period of His ministry.

He says to them, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, *your heavenly Father* will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will *your Father* forgive your trespasses.”¶

He tells them “when they fast, to anoint their head and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, but unto *their Father*, who seeth in secret ; and *their Father*, who seeth in secret, shall reward them openly.”\*\*

He rebukes their distrust of divine Providence in these words : “Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not,

\* Mat. v. 16.

† Mat. v. 44, 45, 48.

‡ Mat. vi. 1, 4.

§ Mat. vi. 6, 8.

|| Mat. vi. 9.

¶ Mat. vi. 14, 15.

\*\* Mat. vi. 17, 18.

neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet *your heavenly Father* feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? \* Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For *your heavenly Father* knoweth that ye have need of all these things." †

And, finally, when encouraging them to look for an answer to their prayers, He teaches them to do so in consideration of the divine fatherhood, which He evidently regards as a really subsisting relation, from which inferences may be reasonably drawn, and on which expectations may be legitimately and confidently founded. For His words are, "What man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent! If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto *your children*, *how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him ?*" ‡

Thus does it appear that the Lord Jesus Christ, when addressing Himself to His disciples on this occasion, before as yet He had given them any instruction in regard to His divine sonship, His mediatorial work, and the spiritual privileges and blessings thence resulting,—and not to His disciples only, but to a mixed multitude gathered together from all the surrounding districts,—spoke to them repeatedly and emphatically of the great God as one whom they must love, and honour, and imitate, and pray to, and trust in, as their Father who is in heaven. He did so, moreover, not as if He were bringing any new or strange thing to their ears, or unfolding to them any transcendent mystery which they could hardly be expected to understand or to appreciate ; but as if he were appealing to what was, in a measure, already familiar to their apprehensions and modes of thought, and addressing them in language which needed no commentary in order to convey its force and import to their hearts.

I am as far as possible, indeed, from denying that these and suchlike representations of the divine fatherhood must come

\* Mat. vi. 26.

† Mat. vi. 31, 32.

‡ Mat. vii. 9-11.



home with tenfold additional force and depth of significance to the mind of the matured and fully-instructed Christian, beyond what our Lord's hearers on this occasion could have discerned in them. Nor do I at all question that, in framing this discourse, our Saviour may have had an eye to the instruction that might be derived from it, not merely by those to whom it was immediately addressed, but by His true disciples at an after period, when they should more fully know what it was to be children of God, not only by creation and by providence, but also by redeeming, regenerating, and adopting grace. But whatever secondary or higher meaning we may deem ourselves *now* warranted to put upon our Lord's statements, I confidently maintain that they must have had a primary meaning suited to the circumstances, and level to the capacities and means of knowledge, of those to whom they were originally spoken. And when we consider that these persons were as yet entirely, or in a great measure, ignorant of that special filial relation which is constituted between the God of all grace and His adopted children by faith in Christ Jesus, we are warranted to hold that these statements, as understood by them, could not have conveyed to their minds any further idea than either that God is the common Father of all mankind, or that He is in an especial sense the Father of all true Israelites who know Him, and love Him, and honour Him, and serve Him, and put their trust in Him. Of one thing, at all events, we may be very sure, that our Lord's teaching on this occasion could not have suggested to them anything so entirely foreign to their apprehensions as that they either were, or were destined to be, the children of God, by a participation in that monogenetic sonship which the Saviour himself sustained from eternity in the Godhead.

1. In connection with these remarks on the views of the divine fatherhood which are thus broadly indicated in the Sermon on the Mount, I cannot refrain from noticing an observation made by the same ingenious author to whom I have so often had occasion to allude.

“With Jesus,” he says, “the title ‘*Father*,’ as applied to God, is a familiar household word. And yet, as I think, He uses it with careful and studied discrimination. Thus, for example, I do not know that there is one instance recorded of His using the title of Father with reference to the world at large, or to men generally, or indeed with reference to any but those whom He was pleased to regard as His disciples, and to address and treat accordingly. He speaks to them of God as their Father ; and, so far as my observation goes, to them only. I cannot call to mind a single case in which He gives God that appellation in dealing with the promiscuous crowds that resorted to Him.” \*

I know not how this statement is to be reconciled with those frequent and explicit allusions to the divine fatherhood which were made by our Lord on the occasion above referred to. For surely on that occasion He was addressing Himself, not exclusively to His disciples, but to the promiscuous crowd that thronged around Him. We are told that it was on “seeing the multitudes” that He “went up into a mountain” to deliver this discourse. And the multitude certainly considered the discourse as addressed to them, when at the close of it they “were astonished at His doctrine, because He *taught them* as one having authority.” Besides, we have no reason to think that the disciples had as yet received so full an insight into the truths of the evangelical dispensation as could lead them to regard God as their Father in a higher sense than that in which He was so viewed by other pious Israelites. And it is remarkable that in all the passages of this discourse in which the paternity of God is introduced, there is no reference to any of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, with the single exception, if indeed it be an exception, of what is said in Mat. vi. 14, 15, respecting our heavenly Father’s willingness to forgive our trespasses, provided we forgive those who trespass against us, but not otherwise. With this single and doubtful exception, there is nothing that can be regarded as distinctively evangelical in what is said of the divine fatherhood. All else that is said of God, as bearing this relation,

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 164.

does not appear to go beyond those principles of natural theology, which every intelligent man who believes in God, whether or not he believes also in Christ Jesus, will acquiesce in.

Apart from the Sermon on the Mount, however; there are other "instances in which," as it appears to me, our Lord unquestionably "uses the title of '*Father*' with reference to the world at large, or to men generally." Thus, in His conversation with the woman of Samaria, He says, "Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship *the Father*." "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship *the Father* in spirit and in truth; for *the Father* seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."\* Here the term "*Father*" is not to be regarded as exclusively denoting the First Person of the Trinity. It is evidently synonymous with "God," and is applied to Him in order to mark Him out as the common Father of the human family. Calvin has observed, in his commentary on this passage, that "By calling God *the Father*, our Lord seems indirectly to contrast Him with *the fathers* whom the woman had mentioned as worshipping in Mount Gerizim; and to convey this instruction, that God will be a common Father to all, so that He will be generally worshipped without distinction of places or nations."

I may refer also to the parable of the prodigal son, as furnishing the most incontestable evidence that our Saviour represented God as, in a general sense, the Father of all men, not excepting those sinners who have spurned His authority and wandered from His household, and sunk to the lowest depths of misery and degradation. Nor is the evidence thus furnished to be neutralised by representing the parable as an indication of God's willingness *to become* the Father of sinful men, in the event of their returning to Him. For, as I have already shown in a former Lecture, the parable is, by such a construction, utterly perverted or misconceived. From first to last, the prodigal is represented as no less really the father's son than was

\* John iv. 21, 23, 24.



his elder brother. He was his son before he left his home. He continued to view himself as his father's son so soon as he "came to himself" in the far country. He arose and came to his father as a son, confessedly unworthy indeed to be so called, but still addressing his aggrieved parent by the name of father. His father welcomed him as a lost son whom he had recovered. And his elder brother murmured, not because an alien had been for the first time admitted into the family, but because a dissolute and profligate son had been restored to it. No fair interpretation can be put upon this parable that does not to the fullest extent recognise it as our Lord's doctrine that God is, in a general sense, the common Father of all mankind.

2. Another observation of the same ingenious author, respecting our Lord's teaching on the subject of the divine fatherhood, must not be allowed to pass without special notice.

"It is not a little remarkable," he says, "that while our Lord is always, as it would seem, seeking to familiarise the minds of His disciples with the idea of God being their Father, He makes so little use of the human analogy. *It looks almost as if He studiously avoided it*; as if He would have them to form their conceptions of what it is to have God for their father, not from what they might see in any human household, but from what they saw of Him as a member of the divine household." \* And again he says, "As regards the nature and character of God's paternal relation to His people, there is in Scripture, especially in our Lord's teaching, *a studied avoiding of the human analogy*; indicating a desire on His part that His disciples should learn to conceive of their sonship, not analogically at all, but by direct knowledge and insight; or, in other words, that they should be led to apprehend their sonship—not merely as a relation similar to sonship in a human family,—nor even as a relation similar to His own sonship in the divine family—but as identically the same relation." †

This statement, in so far as it affirms that "in the Scriptures, and especially in our Lord's teaching, there is a studied avoiding of the human analogy as regards the character of God's

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 180.

† Ibid., p. 212.

paternal relation to His people," appears to me to be altogether groundless.

The very author by whom the statement is advanced admits that "There is undoubtedly one instance in which our Lord brings in the analogy of the human fatherhood, and founds an argument upon it *a fortiori* (Mat. vii. 9-11 ; Luke xi. 11-13). 'What man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things unto them that ask Him?' " \*

This instance he endeavours to set aside by observing, that "The analogy is here employed only for a very specific and limited purpose ; and further, that the employment of it is quite consistent with the very highest view of God's fatherhood ; nay, that the higher the view taken of that fatherhood, so much the stronger is the *a fortiori* reasoning." †

The force of this example, however, is not to be thus evaded. It is true, "the analogy is here employed for a specific and limited purpose." But that purpose happens to be the *special purpose, and the only purpose*, for which, at the time, our Lord had occasion to employ it, namely, to confirm our trust in God's willingness to hear our prayers. And by thus *making all the use of the human analogy which the occasion called for*, our Lord has sufficiently recognised its propriety and significance. It is worthy of remark, moreover, that this use of the human analogy occurs in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, so that it may, with all fairness, be held to be applicable to those very frequent and very pointed allusions to the fatherhood of God, which are, in the course of that sermon, associated with it.

Again, that "the employment of the human analogy on this occasion is quite consistent with the very highest view of God's fatherhood," I fully admit. But what then? If our Lord did not consider this human analogy unworthy or inappropriate to be used with reference even to so high a relation as that which

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 179.

† Ibid., p. 180.

from eternity the Father sustained towards Himself in the Godhead, much less could He have held it to be unworthy or inappropriate, as a representation of that humbler relation which, in our view, the Father sustains towards the children of His adoption.

As for the general assertion that "our Lord appears to have studiously avoided the use of the human analogy with reference to God's paternal relation to His people," I am utterly at a loss to see on what ground it can be vindicated. On the contrary, a reference to the human analogy is implied in every mention of "His heavenly Father," or of "our heavenly Father," which at any time is made by Him. It must be so, unless we suppose Him to have used the expression in some superhuman sense, which His hearers could not possibly understand, and that, too, without being at any pains to caution them against attaching to it its ordinary and familiar meaning. Certainly, when our Lord addresses us in human language, we must interpret His words according to the plain meaning which, as used among men, they are understood to bear. And when we find Him, in His Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, repeatedly and emphatically styling God "our Father," and instructing us to address Him by that title, it seems to me utterly indefensible to maintain that He is all the while "studiously avoiding the analogy of human fatherhood," and "indicating a desire that we should conceive of our sonship quite otherwise than as bearing a resemblance to what we might see in any human family." If any such "free handling" of the language of Holy Scripture is to be adopted by orthodox theologians, I know not with what consistency they can protest against the procedure of those who strive, by the like forced and unwarrantable methods of interpretation, to explain away the most essential articles of revealed truth.

3. I must here observe, however, that in the course of those remarks, to which I have thus found it necessary to take exception, there is a statement made in which I am prepared, with some necessary explanations, substantially to acquiesce.



The statement is to this effect, that "our Lord led His disciples to form their conceptions of what it is to have God for their Father from what they saw and heard of His own filial intercourse with God."

There can be no doubt that this was one of the methods, and probably of all methods the most effective, in which our Lord exhibited to His disciples the nature of that relation to God, as adopted children, into which it was His gracious design that they should be brought. He gave them, in His own filial intercourse with His heavenly Father, the purest and most perfect exemplification of the offered sonship.

This filial intercourse, however, as I have formerly shown, is not to be regarded as a manifestation of the monogenetic sonship of His divine nature, communicated to and shared in by His humanity. It is rather to be regarded as a manifestation of that *human sonship* in its highest type and most consummate excellence, which, in common with all other human qualities and relations, the eternal Son of God assumed when He became incarnate. With this necessary proviso, I am ready to subscribe to the following just and striking observations:—

"Let it be remembered that our Lord's disciples were continually hearing His filial utterances, and witnessing His filial walk. No doubt, the words that fell from His lips were often such as they could not as yet fully understand—pointing to a higher condition than that which He now occupied, in which He had been, as a Son, with God as His Father. But yet again, on the other hand, they could not but perceive that, in circumstances precisely similar to their own, and under the pressure of an experience which might any day be theirs, He still habitually looked up to God as His Father. Nor did He ever give them the slightest intimation of His looking up to God as His father on these occasions, any otherwise than as He taught them, on the like occasions, to look up to God as their Father. They could not but observe in their Master's whole demeanour, in His everyday conduct, in all His sayings and doings, a very peculiar style of godliness—new, unprecedented—giving evidence of a singularly close, intimate, warm, endearing sort of connection between God and Him—showing Him to be on terms of

most confidential fellowship with God. They could not but know—indeed, He told them—that this sprung from His knowing God to be His Father, and feeling Himself to be God's Son; that it was what this fatherhood and sonship meant and implied. But this very manner of living with God, as they were constantly instructed, it was their duty to aim at and realise. And they were instructed, with a view to it, to call God their Father. Would it naturally enter into their minds to suppose that this language denoted a different relation in their case from what it did in His?—that while they were expected to walk with God in that wonderful way of holy familiarity and loving truth in which they saw Him walking with God, they were to be placed in a less favourable position for doing so?—that God was not to be their Father as He was His, though they were expected to be like Him, as sons? Surely the opposite of all this is rather the conclusion fairly to be drawn, unless some very clear intimation has been given to the contrary.”\*

All this, I admit, is very just and very beautiful. But what is the solution of it? Not surely that the *Divine Sonship, as it exists in the Godhead*, was imparted to the human nature in the person of the God-man, and is in like manner to be imparted to His disciples? No. We have already seen that this solution is inadmissible. We must have recourse, therefore, to some other explanation of that wonderful filial intercourse with God which “the man Christ Jesus” evinced in His whole conduct and deportment, and which His disciples were taught to aspire after. Nor have we far to seek for an explanation that seems to be altogether sound and satisfactory. We may find it, as already observed, in that *human sonship*, which, in common with all the other sinless attributes of humanity, the incarnate Word assumed into union with His divinity, and which, in its highest excellence and most perfect development, He displayed in His whole life of singularly close, familiar, and endearing fellowship with His heavenly Father.

We are told, indeed, that the incarnate Saviour could not possibly have been, at one and the same time, the divine Son of God and a human Son of God. But surely there is no

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 181, 182.

greater mystery in His being so than is necessarily implied in His being both divine and human. And, in truth, we cannot believe Him to have been *very man* without believing Him to have been partaker of all the qualities and relations proper to man, including that relation of sonship which all men sustain to "the Father of their spirits."

Such being the case, the peculiar "filial utterances and filial walk" which He exhibited to His disciples are to be ascribed to *His perfect human sonship*. And what made them so remarkable, so wonderful, so unprecedented, was just the circumstance of His being the only descendant of Adam who was altogether exempt from the blight or taint of sin, and consequently the only one in whom the filial spirit of loving and trustful fellowship with God was fully matured and perfectly manifested.

4. There is yet one other statement of the same writer to which, as bearing on the purport of our Lord's teaching on the subject of His people's sonship, we must shortly advert. It is to the following effect:—

"Although our Lord, during the greater part of His earthly ministry, refrains, for wise reasons, from giving express utterance to the identity of His people's sonship with His own; yet after His death and resurrection, when there is no longer any reason for reserve, He openly acknowledges them as altogether one with Himself, holding the same position which He holds in the Father's family."

The reason assigned for that reserve which Christ is alleged to have maintained, prior to His death and resurrection, regarding the identity of His own sonship with that of His disciples, is, that until these events had taken place "He was not in a position to do full justice to the subject."

"Until His work of redemption is complete, the way for our entering into His sonship is not fully opened up. In order to His making us partakers of His relation to God as the Son, He must make Himself partaker of our relation to God as under the law. And not only so. He must redeem us from the guilt and condem-



nation which in that relation we have incurred, and under which we lie helpless. That He has not done till His life on earth is ended. All the time He is on earth He is about the doing of it. But it is only on the cross that He can say, 'It is finished.' It is only 'by His resurrection from the dead,' as Paul says (Rom. i. 4), that 'He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness.' And it is only then, and not before, that He is in a position to make the entire benefit and blessedness of His sonship available in behalf of His disciples. Until then, He is justified in not fully, or in express terms, bringing out all that is implied in His sonship being the model of theirs." \*

I am rather inclined to doubt the soundness and force of this reasoning. For the circumstance that our Lord's mediatorial work was not actually completed until He died and rose again, does not appear to be any sufficient reason why He should maintain a temporary reserve with reference to the *sonship* of His disciples, more than with reference to their redemption, their sanctification, their perseverance, their resurrection from the grave, and their heavenly inheritance, of all which on several occasions He unreservedly spoke to them, before as yet He had offered up that great sacrifice, by which, equally with the privilege of adoption, these evangelical benefits have been secured. In confirmation of the argument, however, we are referred to two passages of Holy Scripture.

(1.) One of these is Heb. ii. 11, where it is written, "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

"The meaning," we are told,† "is, not that He might be ashamed of us, but that, were it not for the grounds or considerations referred to, *He might be ashamed of Himself*. It is the same meaning that is suggested, when it is said of God (Heb. xi. 16) that 'He is not ashamed to be called the God of the patriarchs, for He hath prepared for them a city.' Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, as He might well be if His doing so were a mere lip-compliment or figure of speech, and nothing more. He has no reason to be thus ashamed, because His calling us brethren involves, not a mere nominal title of courtesy, but a real and actual participation with Him in His rela-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 187, 188.

† Ibid., p. 188, 189.

tion to the Father and its fruits, so far as the nature He shares with us allows. Passages are cited from the Old Testament to prove that Christ has no cause to be ashamed, in the sense now explained, to call His disciples brethren. And the first and chief is from the 22d Psalm, which so wonderfully brings out in its beginning the suffering, and in its close the triumphant, Messiah. The verse quoted is the point of transition from the one state to the other,—from Christ suffering to Christ triumphant. It is then that He says, ‘I will declare Thy name unto my brethren.’ Now that all my agony in redeeming them is over, I may without reserve call them brethren. I need not be ashamed of doing so. For I can now worthily and effectually declare to them Thy name, as magnified in my obedience unto the death for them, and in their being admitted, on the footing of that obedience, to be my brethren—my brethren, as having the same standing in the Father’s house that I have, and the same warm place in the Father’s heart.”

This construction of the passage is, no doubt, very ingenious ; but I hardly think it will bear the test of criticism. It seems evident, both from the text itself and from the whole tenor of the context, that what the inspired writer has in view, when saying, “*for which cause* He is not ashamed to call them brethren,” is, not their participation in the Saviour’s heavenly sonship, but His participation in their human nature. The reason of His being “not ashamed to call them brethren,” as expressly stated in the preceding clause, is, that “He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, *are all of one,*” *i.e.*, “of one race or parentage ;” according to what is said a few verses after, that “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” And as for the quotations from the Old Testament, and in particular from the 22d Psalm, any one who looks at the passage cannot fail to see that these quotations are adduced, *not as assigning the reason* why our Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren, but simply as *proving the fact* that he is not ashamed to do so.

In regard to the alleged parallel passage (Heb. xi. 16), “Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city,” I may observe, that the

word "wherefore" refers to the faith of the patriarchs as described in the previous verse ; and the clause "for He hath prepared for them a city," is to be understood as merely *alleging a proof of the fact* that "God is not ashamed to be called their God," and not as *assigning the ground or reason* of the fact.

Further, I may venture to ask, Whether it can be seriously maintained that Christ "might well have been ashamed of Himself," had He called His disciples brethren before His work of redemption was actually completed ? Surely the circumstance that that work had been cheerfully and deliberately undertaken by Him,—that He was earnestly and devotedly engaged in the prosecution of it,—and, further, that He had full confidence in His ability to accomplish it, was enough to show that there could be no "mere lip-compliment" in His ascribing, by anticipation, to His disciples the full privileges and blessings that were destined to result from it.

I may yet further be allowed to ask, *Whether it be really the fact* that Christ only became "not ashamed to call His people brethren" after His work of redemption was completed ? I do not believe that there is any ground for saying so. We may not indeed be able to prove, from the express statements of the evangelists, that our Lord, before His death, was in the constant habit of applying to His disciples the word "brethren ;" but assuredly He all along treated them as brethren. There are at least two instances in which He expressly calls them so, whereas there is but one instance (Mat. xxviii. 10, and John xx. 17) in which He so calls them after His resurrection. In Mat. xxv. 40 He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of *these my brethren*, ye have done it unto me." Again, in Mat. xii. 49, 50, we are told that "He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and *my brethren* ! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." And who that has read His consolatory address to His sorrowing friends on the evening before His death, and the solemn intercessory prayer with



which it was concluded, can fail to perceive in them the expression of a tenderness of love, a fulness of sympathy, an intimacy of fellowship, a oneness of interest and feeling with His disciples, which is fully equivalent to "calling them His brethren" ?

(2.) The other passage that has been adduced in confirmation of the argument under review, is our Lord's address to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection—"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."\* Here, we are told, all His former reserve is laid aside.

"He now for the first time (?) calls His disciples, in unequivocal terms, His brethren. He might have been ashamed to do so before, but He is not ashamed to do so now. Before, His calling them His brethren might only have implied that He made common cause with them,—that He took His place among them,—that He became one of them, so as to share all their liabilities and responsibilities. His incarnation was sufficient evidence of that. But it was evidence of nothing more than that. For anything that appeared, He might have thus identified Himself with them, with no benefit to them, but only with damage to Himself—sharing their fate, and so far sympathising with them, but not effecting their deliverance. While that state of things lasted, He might be ashamed to call them brethren: but when that is over, and it is seen that He has not merely partaken with them in their miserable state, but accomplished their redemption out of it, He is not ashamed—there need be no more reserve—as to His calling them His brethren. Then He is in a position to deal with them as out-and-out one with Himself—His brethren—having the same position that He has in the Father's family, and the same interest in the family inheritance." "He never (?) called them His brethren before. He did unquestionably keep up a certain distinction between Himself and them. He was not able thoroughly to bring out His identifying of them with Himself in His sonship, until He had proved His identifying of Himself with them in their subjectship to be really, for them, their redemption from its curse. But now even this reserve is over: He can say 'My brethren' with fullest, clearest, warmest welcome—welcoming them into His own very relation of sonship and subjectship com-

\* John xx. 17.

bined: 'Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' "

"I shrink," continues the author, "from any exposition of this message of love, sent through that loving woman to the lonely eleven, which would make it suggestive of separation or distinction. It was not an occasion for reminding the disciples that He and they stood in different relations to God—relations nominally the same, yet really different. But it was an occasion for assuring them that He and they stood in the same relation, and that He was now in a position to assure them of this, now that He had expiated their guilt and made their peace with Heaven. Why should the risen Lord seize on that opportunity for discriminating between His sonship and theirs, and,—it must be added, for they go together,—between His subjectship and theirs, in a way that He had never thought of before? It was a strange time to take for that—a strange place—a strange medium! No! It is, I am confident, not distinction but identification that He means when He says, 'Tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' " \*

The force of this argument wholly depends on two positions, in neither of which are we prepared to acquiesce.

One of these positions is, that our Lord Jesus Christ had "never called His disciples brethren before," and that even had He done so, the title, as applied to them, "might, for anything that appeared, have meant nothing more than that He identified Himself with them, with no benefit to them, but only with damage to Himself," so that, "while that state of things lasted, He might be ashamed to call them brethren."

Now we have already seen that this position is equally unfounded in fact and inconclusive in argument. For while this instance is the only one after His resurrection in which He called His disciples brethren, there are two instances in which He expressly so called them, and many in which He treated them as brethren, before His death. Moreover, it cannot be reasonably affirmed that "His calling them brethren, prior to His resurrection, might, for anything that appeared, have

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 190-192.

meant nothing more than that He identified Himself with them *only to His own damage*, and not *also to their advantage*." For the application to them of such a title must be viewed in connection with the numerous and express assurances which He had given them, that the richest spiritual blessings should be conferred on those who were truly numbered among His disciples. And why should He, prior to His death and resurrection, be "ashamed to call them brethren," to the effect of assuring them of their heavenly sonship, when we find that He was not ashamed to give them the most explicit promises that "they should never perish, but should have everlasting life," that "He would raise them up at the last day," and that "it was their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom"? The actual realisation of these promises was just as much dependent on His death and resurrection, as was their admission to the full privileges of the sons of God. And hence there was no reason why, prior to these events, He should maintain more reserve as to the one than as to the other.

The second position on which this argument depends is the construction put upon our Lord's words, when He says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father," as implying, *not a distinction* between His sonship and that of His disciples, but, on the contrary, an *identification* of them with one another.

In so construing these words, the ingenious author is at issue with the most distinguished commentators both of ancient and of modern times.

*Alford* observes, regarding these words, that "This distinction, *πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν*, where *πατέρα ἡμῶν* seems so likely to have been said, has been observed by all commentators of any depth as indicating an *essential difference in the relations*." *Bengel* remarks that "Christ does not say *Our Father*, but *My Father and your Father*. We have our relationship to God through Him; *He has His in a manner altogether peculiar to Himself, and primarily*." *Hengstenberg* observes, "He does not say 'To our Father and to our God,'



because God was Christ's God and Father in a different sense from that in which He was their God and Father. He was their God only because He was Christ's, and they Christ's brethren; according to Augustin's statement, '*Mine by nature, yours by grace.*'" The comment of *Stier* on this passage is as follows: "Our Lord says *Brethren* immediately after speaking of *the Father*. But He does not say 'to *our* Father and *our* God,' for that would have been not merely unbecoming, but untrue and impossible. In this place such an expression as 'our Father' was most obvious, if admissible; and its omission is most decisive. A rationalistic Christ must have said '*our*' (ἡμεῶν) in order to give honour to truth, and to avoid exalting Himself unduly in the presence of the common God and Father; but the God-man cannot possibly use such an expression." To the same effect *Cyril* of Jerusalem observes, "My Father in one sense, by nature; yours in another, by privilege:" *Chrysostome*, "In different senses *my* Father and *yours*:" *Augustin*, "He does not say '*Our* Father;' He is my Father by nature, and in another sense your Father by grace. And He says, My God and your God, not our God,—in one sense therefore mine, and in another sense yours; my God, under whom I also am man; your God, between whom and you I am Mediator." *Ambrose* in like manner says, "The Father is His Father by propriety of nature, whereas *to us* He became a Father through the Son, not by right of nature, but of grace."

If these commentators are right, as I believe them to be, in their interpretation of this passage, it then appears that our Lord in His address to Mary Magdalene is *so far from identifying* His own sonship with that of His disciples, that *He most significantly and emphatically discriminates them from one another*.\* And as for the general argument in favour of the opposite view, drawn from the alleged unlikelihood of our Lord "reminding His disciples on such an occasion that He and they stood in different relations to God—relations nominally the same, yet really different"—it seems a sufficient

\* See Note O.

reply to urge the impossibility of His intending on this, or on any occasion, to represent the sonship of His people as identically the same relation with that which He himself sustained to the Father, in respect of His divine nature as the only-begotten Son of God.

I cannot leave this topic without further observing that, apart from the insufficiency of the scriptural proofs above considered, the statement under review respecting *our Lord's more free, familiar, and unreserved recognition of the disciples as His brethren, after His great work of redemption had been completed*, appears to me to be as nearly as possible *the opposite of the fact*.

Any reserve which He previously maintained with them was not in regard to the fulness of His sympathy with them, or the closeness and kindness of His love for them as His brethren, but rather in regard to the majesty of His divine nature, and the deep mysteries of His expiatory sufferings and death. After His resurrection, on the other hand, He seems to have been at more pains to *impress them with just views of the dignity of His person, and the efficacy of His mediation*, than to encourage in them anything like a full renewal of the same familiarities of intercourse and fellowship to which they had been previously accustomed. The fewness and shortness of the interviews which He held with them between His resurrection and ascension are very remarkable. We know of only six days out of the forty on which He appeared to any human being; and in these six days we have no evidence that He devoted more than as many hours to intercourse with those to whom He showed Himself. He was seen by them only ten times in all, and His meetings with them were generally abrupt and of but short continuance—sufficient, indeed, to enable them to identify Him as their risen Lord, who had been dead and was alive again, but not such as to afford them an opportunity of returning to their old habits of intimate and familiar fellowship. How are we to account for this? What construction are we to put upon it? What purpose can we suppose to have been served by this apparently studied effort

to stand aloof, and to shun any renewal of prolonged and familiar intercourse?

I am satisfied that there is much truth in the following remarks of Dr Hanna upon this subject. In answer to the question, What impression was all this studied distance and reserve fitted to make upon the minds of His disciples? he replies:—

“Put yourselves in their exact position at this time; remember that not one of them before His death had risen to any thought or belief in His divinity,—that from all their earlier earthly notions of Him they had to be weaned, that after days and years of the easiest companionship with Him they had to be raised to the belief that it was the very Lord of heaven and earth with whom they had been holding converse,—yet that this belief was to be so formed within them as not to militate against the idea of His true and proper humanity. See, then, what an important part in the execution of this needful but most difficult task, must have been fulfilled by His mode of dealing with them during the forty days. If at once, after a few interviews, sufficient simply to remove all doubt as to His resurrection, Jesus had passed up into the heavens never to be seen again on earth; and if the descent of the Spirit had immediately thereon ensued, and the eyes of the apostles had thus been at once and fully enlightened, and the great truth of their Master's Godhead had been flashed upon their minds, the danger undoubtedly would then have been that, seen in the blaze of the new glory thrown around His person, the man Christ Jesus had been lost—the humanity swallowed up in the divinity; nor would it have been so easy to persuade those men that, ascended up on high and seated at the right hand of the Father, He was the same Jesus still—a brother to them as truly as when He lived among them, equally alive to all human sympathies as when He walked with them by the way, or sat down with them in the upper chamber.—Take, again, the other alternative—that after His resurrection Christ had immediately resumed and continued, though only for these forty days, the exact kind of life that He had led before, returning to all His old haunts and occupations; would not such a return on His part to the old familiarities of His former intercourse have had a tendency to check the rising faith in His divinity—to tie His disciples down again to a knowing of Him only after the flesh,—to give to His humanity such



bulk and prominence as to make it in their eyes overshadow His divinity? No treatment then could be conceived more nicely fitted to the spiritual condition and wants of those men at that time than the very treatment which our Lord adopted and carried out. It was well fitted, gradually and gently, to lead those disciples on from their first misty, imperfect, unworthy ideas of His person, character, and work, to clearer, purer, loftier conceptions of Him. In no better way could a faith in their Master's divinity have been superinduced upon their former faith in Him as a man, a friend, a brother, so that the two might blend together without damage done to either by the union: their knowledge of Him as human not interfering with their trust in Him as divine—their faith in Him as God not weakening their attachment to Him as man.”\*

Be this as it may, the fact is undeniable that after His resurrection the Lord Jesus did not show any greater disposition than He had previously done to give to His disciples the name and treatment of His brethren, or otherwise to recognise, to any greater extent than formerly, the similarity or identity of their standing in His Father's house to that which He himself sustained. And thus there is no ground for the position we have been controverting—that Christ, while at first maintaining a wise reserve in regard to the identity of His people's sonship with His own, had no sooner risen from the dead than He broadly declared the filial relation of His disciples to be substantially the same with that which belonged to Himself as the only-begotten Son of God.

But here it may be asked, Does our Lord, then, in His personal teaching, give no indication of any peculiar privileges pertaining to believers as God's adopted children, by reason of their fellowship and union with Him as the Son of God, beyond such as might be held to be included in their mere restoration to the original privileges of Adam's sonship? I apprehend that some such indications have been given by Him. How precious, for example, and how significant are the following statements: “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and

\* Hanna's ‘Forty Days after our Lord's Resurrection,’ p. 38-41.

mother." \* "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." † "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." ‡ "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." § From these, as well as from other passages of like import which in a former Lecture I had occasion to adduce, there evidently seems to be reserved for such as receive the evangelical adoption some better things than the lost privileges of Adam's sonship. And though it were unwarranted to conclude from such passages that believers are exalted to the same filial relation to God with that divine Person who is His only-begotten Son, we have good grounds for the persuasion that they have fellowship with their Redeemer in the dignity and blessedness resulting from His sonship, in so far as these may be communicable to created beings, and that it is their privilege to share with Him in the endearments of His Father's love and the glories of His Father's kingdom.

\* Mat. xii. 50.

‡ John xiv. 2, 3.

† Luke xii. 32.

§ John xvii. 22-24.

## LECTURE XI.

### MODE OF ADMISSION INTO THE EVANGELICAL SONSHIP.

WE have now seen that, without prejudice to that general relation of sonship, which all mankind, as intelligent and moral creatures, may be held to sustain to the "Father of their spirits," there is a special and higher sonship, pertaining to those who are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And we have endeavoured to show, by an investigation of such evidence as the Scriptures have afforded, that there is included in this special sonship, not only a restitution of the full privileges and blessings of the filial relation to God as sustained by Adam before the Fall, but also somewhat of a conformity to that adorable Being—the only-begotten Son of God—by whom this restitution is effected, and somewhat of a participation or fellowship with Him in the endearments of His Father's love, and the glories of His Father's kingdom.

An interesting subject of inquiry now presents itself, to which for a little our attention must be turned. I allude to *the mode of admission into the evangelical Sonship*. How, or by what means, is this relation constituted? What is it on the part of God, and what is it on the part of man, that directly leads to our investiture with so great a privilege?

I. I have already had occasion to observe, that the sonship of believers must ultimately be traced to the sovereign grace of God, as the source from which it flows; and to the mediatorial work of the Redeemer, as the ground on which they become entitled to the enjoyment of it.



But as regards their *actual admission* to this relation, I may now remark, in the language of our Confession of Faith, that it is accomplished by an act of "*adoption*" on the part of God, "by which all those that are justified are taken into the number and enjoy the liberties and privileges of His children."

The term "*adoption*" has reference to the practice, occasionally observed by persons who have no offspring, of assuming the children of other persons as their own, and binding themselves to discharge towards them the parental duties. Among the Romans this practice was regulated by statute, and made a matter of public concern. The act of adoption was required to be performed with the sanction and authority of the civil magistrate, before whom the consent of all the parties interested in the transaction was publicly and formally given; and when the relation was thus legally constituted, the adopted child entered into the family of his new father, assumed his name, became subject to his authority, partook of his dignities, and acquired a title to his inheritance. This practice was not peculiar to the Romans; it prevailed also among the Greeks, the Jews, the Egyptians, and several other nations. We have one notable instance of it in the case of Esther, who, when her parents died, was adopted by Mordecai. Another example, equally notable, is that of Moses, who, on being found exposed on the banks of the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, was nurtured and educated by the Egyptian princess as her own son; but who, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming the reproach and affliction of the Lord's people greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And from the readiness with which first Abraham, and afterwards Sarah, entertained the thought of another than their own actual offspring being admitted to the standing of a child, and constituted heir of the name and possessions of the family, it would seem that this practice was observed in patriarchal times.\*

I have already endeavoured, in a former Lecture, to show the propriety of applying the term *adoption* to that gracious act

\* Gen. xv. 2, and xvi. 2.

on the part of our heavenly Father, which in the New Testament is usually denoted by it. And though, it must be owned, the analogy on which such a use of the expression proceeds is not perfect—as no human analogy can be in all respects when used to represent to us the doings of the Almighty—yet it is sufficiently close to warrant us in saying, that “believers are received by adoption into the family of God,” when they not only recover the full privileges of their original sonship, but obtain also, through union and fellowship with the Son of God, other blessings far higher and more precious than any which Adam forfeited; and are fully assured, moreover, of the possession of all their privileges, by the plighted word and covenant of the God of Truth, which endure for ever.

Some difference of opinion has prevailed among theologians regarding the relation between adoption and justification.

This relation is viewed in our Confession of Faith as a very close one; for it is there stated, that “All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption;” in which statement it seems to me to be implied, that while the two blessings are inseparably connected, still adoption is not included in justification as one of its constituent parts, but is rather a distinct blessing graciously superadded to it.

Turretine makes adoption to be nothing more than another name for what is called the positive element in justification; that is to say, for “the acceptance of the believer’s person as righteous,” which is conjoined in justification with the free pardon of all his sins. Dr Hill seems to have held the same opinion; for in the course of his very brief and cursory remarks upon the subject, he speaks of adoption as “not only marking the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges enjoyed by Israel under the Old Testament, and that imitation of the Supreme Being, of which faith in the Gospel is the principle, prompting all true believers to become ‘followers of God as dear children;’ but as including, besides both these meanings, *a particular view of the change made upon the condition of all that are justified*; who, although they were ‘enemies by wicked

works,' become through faith in Jesus the children of God."\* The same view is still more expressly stated by Dr Dick, who says, that "adoption appears to him to be virtually the same with justification, and to differ from it merely in *the new view which it gives* of the relation of believers to God, and the *peculiar form in which it exhibits* the blessings to which they are entitled, whether we say that a sinner passes from a state of guilt and condemnation into a state of favour with God, or that he is translated from the family of Satan into the family of heaven, *we express the same fact, and only diversify the terms.*"†

I cannot admit the justice of this representation. There is no doubt, indeed, that fallen and sinful creatures, who have violated the law of God, and exposed themselves to its righteous sentence, must first of all be absolved from guilt and restored to favour before they can receive so great a blessing at the hand of God, as that of being ranked among the number of His dear children. But, on the other hand, it would not necessarily follow, unless God in the gracious arrangements of His Gospel had so provided, that those who have been justified should, *ipso facto*, be adopted. Justification is altogether a judicial act, in which God deals with us in His capacity of Judge or Ruler. And it is quite conceivable that He should, in this capacity, have fully released us from the penalties of disobedience, and restored us to the position of righteous and loyal subjects, without, at the same time, in His capacity of a Father, receiving us into the bosom of His family, and lavishing on us all the fulness of His parental love. His doing this is something far more than the justified sinner could have either asked or thought of, if God of His great goodness had not taught him to expect it. It evidently shows that "where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded."

But whatever view may be held as to this question, there can be no doubt that God, our heavenly Father, is the agent in adoption, and that on His part it is an act of grace. For it is of Him that an apostle has assured us, that He hath "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to

\* Hill's Lectures, iii. 272.

† Dick's Lectures, iii. 386.



Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace." It is of Him also that another apostle has declared, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" And indeed it is evident, from the very nature of the case, that none can adopt children into the family of God but God himself; and equally evident, that fallen and sinful men can have nothing in themselves to merit such a favour, but must be beholden for it to the undeserved grace of God.

II. I must farther observe, however, with reference to the subject before us, that this gracious act of adoption on the part of God is not the only thing that is done by Him in the admission of His people to the evangelical sonship. There is also the renovating agency of His Holy Spirit, which is put forth to render them personally qualified for that filial relation to Him with which they are invested.

The same author to whose speculations I have already referred, affirms that, in this respect, there is a close analogy between the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the soul of man, and His agency in the human birth of the incarnate Saviour.

"If it was necessary," he says, "that the Holy Ghost should fashion and mould the human nature of Christ, in order to its being such as might not detract from, but rather harmonise with, and even adorn, the relation of sonship in which He stands from all eternity to the Father, much more are the good offices of the same gracious Spirit needed for human nature as it is in us, if we are to have a share in that relation." "In His case it was simply a birth that the Holy Spirit had to effect; in ours it is a new birth. For Him He had to provide a manhood such as the Son of God might wear, by what might be regarded as equivalent to an act of creative energy, or the utterance of the creative fiat. In us, He finds manhood so marred and corrupted that it requires to be, in a sense, unmade, that it may be made over again anew. This is the work of the Spirit in regeneration. Is it not a work corresponding closely to His agency in the human birth of Christ? He generates Christ's humanity that He might continue to be the Son. He regenerates our humanity that

we may become sons. To be 'born of the Spirit' may thus, I think, be shown to be, as far as the human nature and human state are concerned, an indispensable preliminary condition of their being reconcilable with sonship." \*

Now, whatever may be thought of the analogy here instituted between the regeneration of a sinner and the Saviour's miraculous birth, there can be no doubt as to the truth of the statement, in illustration of which this analogy is introduced,—namely, that the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the souls of men is very closely connected with their entrance into the evangelical sonship. Thus much is implied in the words of the evangelist John, when, speaking of Christ, he says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power (or right—ἐξουσίαν) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." † And a like inference may be drawn from another statement of the same apostle, when, immediately after affirming that "Every one who doeth righteousness is born of God," he exclaims, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" ‡ In both of these passages there is a connection indicated between our being "born of God," and our "becoming," or "being called, the sons of God." Nor is there any difficulty in discerning the propriety, and I may even say the necessity, of such a connection. For, when we consider *what it is to be "born of God"*—that it is the commencement of our spiritual renovation after the Divine image in righteousness and true holiness—we cannot fail to see, in this work of heavenly grace, a most fit and needful accompaniment of our adoption. Nothing can be more wise, more seemly, or more important, than that the *filial standing* should be associated with the *filial character*, and that the "power" or "right" given to assume the former should bring with it the grace to impart and sustain the latter.

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 219, 220.

† John i. 12, 13.

‡ John ii. 22, and iii. 1.

It is not necessary, however, nor do I think it warrantable, in order to vindicate the propriety of this connection, that we should insist on giving anything like a literal import to the figurative expression of a "new birth," by which, as well as by the other figures of a "new creation" and a "resurrection from death," the moral renovation of the human soul is represented. Still less is it necessary or proper that we should draw analogies between this spiritual change,—which is in itself sufficiently mysterious,—and other things still more beyond our comprehension, such as the miraculous human birth, or the eternal generation of the Son of God. To speak of "the close correspondence between the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the soul of man, and His agency in the human birth of the incarnate Saviour;" to state that "regeneration makes us sons by nature, and that, too, in a very literal acceptation of the term;" and, again, to affirm that "John's design is to represent our being sons of God as connected with our regeneration after the very same manner that a man's being the son of his earthly parent is connected with his generation in time; or, what was more in John's mind, after the very same manner that our Lord's being the Son of His heavenly Father is connected with His generation from eternity;" \*—is, I cannot help thinking, not only to put an unjustifiable construction on the figurative language of Holy Scripture, but to speculate somewhat too confidently respecting "secret things which belong unto the Lord our God," and with which it does not become man to intermeddle.

And yet it is very important to remark, that the putting of this unwarrantable construction on the figure referred to, is *absolutely essential to the establishment of the author's position*, that "the sonship of believers is substantially identical with that of the only-begotten Son of God." For it must be remembered that the *Incarnation* is not alleged by him as proving anything more than the *communicableness* of the filial relationship of the Eternal Son to human beings. Even did we admit that on the ground of the Incarnation he had shown this rela-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 233.



tionship to be *capable of being communicated*, it would still remain for him to show that it *actually is communicated* to all believers. And in order to prove this he seems to have no alternative except to insist on and make good his assertions, that “there is a *close correspondence* between the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the soul of man, and His agency in the human birth of the incarnate Saviour,” and that “our being sons of God is connected with our regeneration *after the very same manner* that our Lord’s being the Son of His heavenly Father is connected with His generation from eternity.” Yes, he must make out, not only that there is a fair *analogy* between the processes,—for *that* would only suffice to establish an “analogical sonship,” to which he attaches no importance,—but that there is “*a close correspondence*” between them, and that they take place “*after the very same manner*.” Now this, I venture to say, is more than he will ever prove ;—certainly it is much more than he has in any way succeeded in proving. Indeed I cannot help marvelling at the extreme slightness of the grounds on which these statements are advanced by him, as contrasted with the clear, explicit, and profuse evidence in proof of the common fatherhood of God, to which he refuses to attach the smallest weight.

III. I must now further observe, however, that while, on the part of God, the entrance of His people into the evangelical sonship is accomplished by their adoption and regeneration, *it is, on their own part, immediately and inseparably connected with their faith in Jesus Christ.*

Although it is not expressly so stated in the Westminster Confession, it is, I apprehend, distinctly enough indicated that faith is, on our part, the means, and the only means, by which this Christian privilege is attained. For the grace of adoption is there said to be conferred by the Father, “in and for His only Son Jesus Christ,” on “*all those that are justified* ;” from which the conclusion seems to be unavoidable, that nothing more is necessary on the part of any man to secure the former

blessing than that which secures the latter—namely, faith alone. The same conclusion may be drawn from the following statements in our catechisms—that “God freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation through Him, requiring faith as the condition to interest them in Him;” that “The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ;” and that “By faith we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.”

That faith, considered as a fiducial and appropriative principle, by which we *trustfully receive Christ* and all His benefits, is the only requisite, on our part, to the attainment of the evangelical sonship, may be reasonably inferred from the nature of the case itself, as illustrated by the human analogy of adoption. For wherever this practice has ordinarily prevailed, it has been held necessary that the person to be adopted should give his free consent to the transaction, provided he were old enough to understand the nature of it, and should deliberately express his willingness to enter into the family of his benefactor. Something akin to this may be reasonably considered as taking place in the spiritual adoption. The privilege is freely offered to us in the Gospel: but it does not actually become ours until we heartily accept of it. We do not, indeed, and cannot *merit* it by ever so great a willingness to partake of it. Yet our receiving it is necessary to its enjoyment. For it is not God's method to force His blessings upon us whether we will have them or no. His way is first to incline us to the reception of them; and then, when we are willing to receive them, He bestows them on us. Now, this receiving of the blessings of the Gospel is just what we understand by the exercise of *faith in Christ*; “the principal acts of which,” as is well stated in our Confession of Faith, “are the accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life,” and of course also, although it is not expressly specified, *for adoption*, as being immediately and inseparably connected with justification.

I need scarcely remind you, however, that a conclusion which may be thus reasonably deduced from the very nature of the case, is confirmed by the positive declarations of Holy Scripture. For Paul expressly says to the Galatians, "Ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus." \* And no less expressly has the evangelist John declared respecting the Saviour, that, "As many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to *them that believe* on His name." † And you will observe that in the latter of these passages *faith* is represented as being the means of our adoption, not on account of any excellencies that belong to it, or any Christian virtues or good works which are the fruits of it, but simply and solely because it is tantamount to the "receiving of Christ," through whom the privilege is secured.

Obvious, however, as this truth appears to be, it is very greatly obscured, though I cannot suppose it to be controverted, by the same writer to whose speculations on the subject of adoption we have already had so much occasion to advert.

"In the matter of our justification," he observes, "we are accustomed to be very scrupulous in excluding everything on our part but faith alone. And it is carefully explained that faith is admitted as the means of our being justified, not because it has any merit or virtue or goodness in itself, nor because it is the source of goodness, as 'working by love,' but only because it is the hand that accepts the benefit, or rather because it is the heart that embraces him in whom the benefit resides. It unites us to Christ. In the matter of our adoption, however, it is the very circumstance of its 'working by love' that fits faith for being the appropriate organ or instrument. In fact, we might almost put it thus: that love occupies somewhat of the same place with reference to adoption or sonship which faith occupies with reference to justification. It is in the exercise of mere and simple faith that we apprehend and realise our acceptance as righteous in the sight of God. It is in the exercise of faith working by love, or of the love by which faith works, that we apprehend and realise our loving fellowship with our heavenly Father as His sons." ‡

\* Gal. iii. 26.

† John i. 12.

‡ Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 245, 246.



This statement seems to me to be very erroneous. Were it true that "the circumstance of its working by love is the very thing that fits faith for being the instrument of our adoption," or that "love occupies somewhat of the same place with reference to adoption which faith occupies with reference to justification," in that case, I apprehend, we should scarcely have any alternative, except to reverse those statements of Holy Scripture, "We love Him because He first loved us," and "*Because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;" or to substitute for them such statements as the following, "God hath so loved us, as to make us His adopted children, because we first loved Him," and "We become His sons, because He first sends forth His Son's spirit of love and confidence into our hearts." And what is the ground on which this statement is made? The only thing offered in the shape of argument is the following:—

"This may be partly what our Lord means by these remarkable words (John xvi. 26, 27), 'At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.' The Elder Brother, having presented Himself, and those whom He 'is not ashamed to call His brethren,' to their common Father, saying, 'Behold I and the little ones whom Thou hast given me,'—steps for a moment aside. He declines to be a mere negotiator between His Father and the younger members of the family, as if there was still some distance or reserve. He insists on their using their full privilege of sonship, and making full proof of their Father's heart; tasting and seeing how He loves them for the love they bear to the Son; the love which, in a sense, constitutes them sons themselves." \*

Now, that the words of the Lord Jesus, here quoted, are far from warranting the conclusion thus drawn from them, must be obvious on a very slight consideration. *In the first place*, there is no reference to the adoption of believers, either in the words themselves, or in their context. All that is said in

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 246, 247.

the ingenious author's comment about "the Elder Brother presenting Himself, and those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, to their common Father," and "insisting that the younger members of the family should use their full privilege of sonship," is entirely foreign matter imported into the passage, instead of being by any reasonable or justifiable process of interpretation deduced from it. The Scriptures, if thus dealt with, might, as it seems to me, be made to teach almost anything we choose to put into them. But, *in the second place*, even if Christ's people were regarded in this passage as the adopted sons of God, and urged to avail themselves of the full privileges of that relationship,—still there is nothing in our Lord's statement to imply that their love to Him had been the means of their adoption. He does not say, "The Father hath adopted you, or made you His children, because ye have loved me," but "The Father himself loveth you because ye have loved me." And *to what effect* does He say that the Father himself loveth them? Not to the effect of making them His sons, but to the effect of *granting their petitions* for whatsoever things they should ask in the name of Christ.

I cannot refrain from farther noticing, although it has no immediate bearing on the question before us, the strange interpretation that is put upon the clause, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you." This clause is construed and paraphrased as if it had been, "I say that *I will not* pray the Father for you"! The Elder Brother is represented as "stepping for a moment aside,"—"declining to be a negotiator between the Father and the younger members of the family," and "insisting that they shall themselves use the full privilege of their own sonship;"—as if it were possible for even the most advanced believer to stand for a single moment on the footing of his own privileges, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, or to have access to the Father independently of the negotiation or mediation of the Saviour! Certainly the meaning of the clause is nothing more than this: "I do not say that I will pray the Father for you; *this* is not the thing which for the present I am most anxious to impress upon you; I have

said it, again and again, in this discourse, so that there is the less necessity for now repeating it. But what I now say, as an additional ground of encouragement to you, is, that my intercession is addressed to no unwilling ear; for the Father himself loveth you, and will therefore assuredly give you whatsoever good things you ask of Him in my name." There was no intention on our Lord's part, we may be very sure, to deny either the constancy or the necessity of His intercession for His people. All that His words imply is, that we are not to think of His intercession *as that which induces God to love them*;—the fact rather being, that God's great love to them is that which led Him to provide for them a Saviour, who should make both atonement and intercession in their behalf, so that the divine love might be fully exercised towards them, consistently with the claims of holiness and justice.

Waiving this matter, however, it seems to me perfectly clear, 1st, That in this passage there is no reference to the adoption of believers; and, 2dly, That though there were such a reference, *their love* is not here represented as the means of their adoption. Accordingly we fall back on the plain statement of the apostle Paul, "Ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus," and on the no less decisive statement of the evangelist John, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe in His name*." And from these we argue, not only that faith in Jesus Christ is the means of adoption, but also that it is so, not as "working by love," but simply as "receiving Christ," in whom we are blessed of God with this, as with all other spiritual and heavenly blessings." \*

IV. There is one other topic, very intimately connected with the manner of entrance into the evangelical sonship, on which it is necessary to make a few remarks: and that is, *the relation in which it stands to baptism*.

It is held by many theologians, and is set forth in the creeds and rituals of several Christian Churches, that baptism is the

\* See Note P.



very means of our obtaining this high privilege ; or, in other words, that by the observance of this sacrament we are “ regenerated with the Holy Spirit, received for God’s own children by adoption,” and “ made members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ;” and in support of this opinion, we are usually referred to such passages of Scripture as the following : “ Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death ? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” \* “ Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ; for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ.” † “ In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ : buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” ‡ “ The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” §

Now, without entering at present into any detailed examination of these passages, I may observe that there are *two general considerations*, by which they may be satisfactorily explained, apart from the doctrine of regeneration and adoption by baptism, which is thought by some to be implied in them.

*In the first place*, the sacraments evidently are, and are universally allowed and understood to be, of a symbolical character ; that is to say, they are appointed signs or representations of spiritual blessings. And thus a foundation is laid for using, with respect to them, that very common and perfectly intelligible figure of speech, according to which the sign is put in the room of the thing signified,—or names and qualities,

\* Rom. vi. 3, 4.

† Col. ii. 11, 12.

‡ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

§ 1 Peter iii. 21.

properly belonging to the one, are ascribed to the other,—without the slightest intention of affirming that the two things are either identical or inseparable. The Lord's Supper is the universally known and recognised sacramental emblem of Christ's sacrifice; and therefore we may say, as the Saviour himself said respecting the bread, "This is Christ's body;" and respecting the wine, "This is Christ's blood;" meaning that His body and blood are represented by these elements, but without any design to affirm, either that the elements are really transformed into that which is denoted by them, or that a participation in the former is always accompanied by a participation in the latter. In like manner, were it even said in Scripture (as it nowhere is) that "baptism *is* regeneration," and that "baptism *is* adoption;" or were qualities and effects pertaining to the one, attributed in the language of Scripture to the other,—this mode of expression might be sufficiently well accounted for by the circumstance that baptism is universally known and acknowledged to be the sacramental sign of these evangelical blessings, without the necessity of supposing,—in defiance, as we shall shortly find, of the plainest statements of the Word of God,—that all baptised persons, and none but they, are regenerated by the Spirit, and adopted into the family of God.

*In the second place*, it ought also to be remembered that the cases of baptism which are referred to in the above passages, were cases, not of baptism administered in infancy, like those with which alone *we* are ordinarily conversant, but of baptism administered to persons of mature age, who had been converted from Judaism or from heathenism, and who, on making an intelligent and deliberate profession of their faith in Jesus Christ, had been solemnly received into the communion of the Christian Church. Such persons, when reminded of their baptism, were very much in the same position with communicants among ourselves who have recently observed the Lord's Supper. And on the fair and charitable assumption that they had been sincere in the professions they had made, and in the symbolical actions they had performed, they might

reasonably be congratulated on the privileges of which, on the supposition of their sincerity, they were partakers, and admonished to walk worthy of these privileges in their subsequent conduct.

I may quote, as to this point, the judicious remarks of Dr Cunningham.

"It tends greatly," he says, "to introduce obscurity and confusion into our whole conceptions on the subject of baptism, that we see it ordinarily administered to infants, and very seldom to adults. This leads us insensibly to form very defective and erroneous views of its design and effect; or rather to live with our minds very much in the state of blanks, so far as concerns any distinct and definite views upon the subject. There is a difficulty felt—a difficulty which Scripture does not afford us materials for altogether removing—in laying down any very distinct and definite doctrine as to the precise bearing and efficacy of baptism in the case of infants, to whom alone ordinarily we see it administered; and hence it becomes practically, as well as theoretically, important to remember that we ought to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of baptism from the baptism of adults, in which it must be *in every instance*, according to the general doctrine of Protestants, *either the sign and seal of a faith and regeneration previously existing*—already effected by God's grace—or else a hypocritical profession of a state of mind and feeling which has no existence. This is the original and fundamental idea of the ordinance of baptism, as it is usually represented to us in Scripture; and when we contemplate it in this light, there is no more difficulty in forming a distinct and definite conception regarding it than regarding the Lord's Supper. We have no doubt that the lawfulness of infant baptism can be conclusively established from Scripture, but it is manifest that the general doctrine with respect to the design and effect of baptism, as above stated, must undergo some modification in its application to the case of infants; and the danger to be provided against is that of taking the baptism of infants, with all the difficulties attaching to a precise and definite statement of its design and effect in their case, and making *this* regulate our whole conceptions with respect to the ordinance in general. Rather ought we to regard *adult* baptism as affording the proper and fundamental type of it, deriving our general conceptions of it from that case; and then, since infant baptism is also fully warranted by Scripture, we ought to examine what modifications the



leading general views of the ordinance must undergo, when applied to the special and peculiar case of the baptism of infants.”\*

Keeping in view, then, these two considerations, the passages above referred to, and others of a like import, may be clearly and satisfactorily interpreted, without supposing baptism to be in all cases the sure and effectual means of regeneration and adoption. For, inasmuch as adult persons were required, before this holy ordinance was administered to them, to profess their faith in Christ, by which, if sincere, the blessings of His Gospel must already have been received by them; and inasmuch as their very observance of the ordinance was a solemn and well-understood symbolical action indicative of these blessings as applied to them and appropriated by them,—it was proper, and justifiable, and highly profitable, to admonish them of the import and significance of what they had just done, by reminding them that “they had been baptised into the death of Christ;” that they had “put off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;” that they had been “buried with Him in baptism, wherein also they were risen with Him;” and that “as many of them as were baptised into Christ had put Him on, so as to be children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” And yet, *whether these, and similar representations, were actually realised in each individual case*, depended on the sincerity with which the baptismal profession was made, and the faith with which the baptismal symbol was received by them.

On the other hand, we have clear and abundant evidence that there is no inherent or unfailing virtue in this initiatory rite of Christianity, as a means of imparting regeneration, adoption, and other evangelical blessings to its recipients.

We have scriptural instances of baptism being administered without any spiritual benefits resulting from it; as in the case of Simon Magus, of whom an apostle declared, shortly after he had received the ordinance, that “he had neither part nor lot in this matter,” that “his heart was not right in the

\* Cunningham’s ‘Historic Theology,’ vol. ii. p. 125, 126.

sight of God," and that he was still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."\*

We have other instances of regeneration taking place *without* or *before* the administration of baptism. Paul was converted before he received this ordinance. The multitude on the day of Pentecost were brought to repentance by the preaching of Peter, and then "they that gladly received his word were baptised."† Lydia had "her heart opened by the Lord, so that she attended to the things spoken to her by Paul,"‡ and not till then was she baptised by the apostle. In these and many other cases that might be mentioned, regeneration and faith, and consequently adoption, preceded baptism.

Again, we find Paul speaking of baptism to the Corinthians in a manner that would be utterly unaccountable had he held it to be the sure and unfailing vehicle of regenerating grace and of other evangelical blessings. "I thank God," he says, "that I baptised none of you but Crispus and Gaius; and I baptised also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptised any other. For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel."§ We cannot suppose, surely, that Paul *would have thanked God that he had not been the means of regenerating* any of the Corinthians, except the very few individuals whom he here mentions; and all the less so that we find him, in a subsequent passage, expressly claiming and glorying in the honour of having been instrumental in their regeneration, when he thus writes, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; *for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.*"|| And then, as to his statement that "Christ had sent him not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel," that statement would not have been true if baptism were the divinely-appointed means of regeneration. For Christ expressly sent Paul as a chosen vessel to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."¶ The statement, "Christ sent me not to baptise,

\* Acts viii. 21, 23.

§ 1 Cor. i. 14-17.

† Acts ii. 41.

|| 1 Cor. iv. 15.

‡ Acts xvi. 14.

¶ Acts xxvi. 18.

but to preach the Gospel," clearly implies that the preaching of the Gospel, and not the administration of baptism, was the great means of reclaiming and regenerating the souls of men, and accordingly that the apostle devoted to it his chief attention; whereas the administration of baptism to those who had been converted by his preaching, was a matter of subordinate importance, which might be left to others. And this view of the case agrees well with other texts, in which we are told that "God hath begotten us," not by baptism, but "by the word of truth;"\* and that Christians are "born again," not by baptism, but "by the incorruptible seed of the word of God," even "that word which by the Gospel is preached unto them."†

Farther, it is a striking circumstance that, much as St John says in the course of his First Epistle regarding the new birth, he nowhere mentions baptism in connection with it: nay, he does not once allude to baptism at all. The tests of regeneration which he proposes are these: "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of God;" "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" "Every one that loveth is born of God;" "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;" "Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world."‡ How strange that any such tests as these should be prescribed by him, if all baptised persons were, as a matter of course, regenerated! On that supposition there was no need for any inquiry, whether they had *faith*, or *love*, or *righteousness*, or whether they *abstained from sin*, and *overcame the world*? The sole and simple question would then have been, whether they had in due form received baptism? That would have settled the point without further examination.

Our doctrine as to this matter is still further confirmed by the analogy of the Jewish ordinance of circumcision, which held very much the same position under the Old Testament with that which is held by baptism under the New. For Paul says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in

\* James i. 18.    † 1 Peter i. 23, 25.    ‡ 1 John ii. 29, iii. 9, iv. 7, v. 1, 4.



the spirit, and not in the letter.”\* Assuming the analogy of the two ordinances, we are warranted to apply to the one the apostle’s language respecting the other, and to say, “He is not a Christian who is one outwardly; neither is that baptism” (to any good or saving purpose) “which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and baptism” (in the true and available sense) “is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.”

But it may be here asked, Is not baptism allowed to be, not a mere sign, but also a *seal*, of the covenant of grace? And how can it be so, if it does not convey a sure pledge of the covenant blessings to those to whom it is administered?

I answer that the sacraments, when viewed as seals of the covenant of grace, convey no assurance of spiritual blessings to their recipients, except on the terms of that covenant which is sealed by them. They confirm to us the promises of God, such as these promises are, with all the requirements which are necessary for the attainment of them. When a seal is affixed to any human document, it confirms what the document contains, neither more nor less. If the document conveys certain benefits or possessions *absolutely*, then the seal confirms them absolutely. But if the document conveys certain benefits or possessions *conditionally*, the seal, in like manner, only confirms them conditionally. Now, it is scarcely necessary to remind you, that the privileges and blessings of the covenant of grace, though *offered* to all men, are not *actually conferred* on all men without distinction, but only on believers. Faith is required in order to the obtaining of them. And if so, it is obvious that the sealing import of the sacraments, as applied to the case of particular individuals, must be subject to the same limitation. The seals of the covenant cannot certify to an *unbeliever* that he is pardoned, regenerated, and adopted, when the covenant sealed by them may be seen, by any one who will look at the plain terms of it, to be *certifying the very reverse.* If they did so, they would be nullifying, or rather contradicting, the covenant, instead of ratifying it.

\* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

XX  
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grace

It is true that all persons who make a credible profession of Christianity are entitled to the sacraments, in the judgment of the visible Church. And in regard to baptism, the infants of professed believers share in this respect in the outward privileges of their parents. But whether they be entitled to the sacraments in the judgment of the Head of the Church, is altogether a different question. If He does not recognise them, either as already being, or as destined ultimately to become, sincere believers, then have they no real interest, either present or prospective, in the covenant of grace. And accordingly the sacraments, though in due form administered to them, are, like seals attached to a blank sheet of parchment, of no significancy and validity whatsoever.

It is also true that, in relation to the Church at large, the sacraments may be considered as holding out a *general assurance* of God's unchangeable adherence to His covenant, and of His readiness to bestow all its benefits on those who by faith are willing to receive them. In this respect all professed Christians may regard them as standing pledges that the mercy of the Lord in Christ is for ever sure, and that He never can, and never will, deny Himself. But when we come to view these sealing ordinances in relation, not to the visible Church as a collective body, but to *particular members* of the visible Church who partake of them, we must beware of ascribing to them any such indiscriminate confirmatory import as would set them against the very covenant which they are meant to seal. Assuredly, when so viewed, they cannot be regarded as holding out any assurance of spiritual blessings, except in accordance with the doctrine of the Word of God. Those who observe baptism and the Lord's Supper cannot be saved on any other terms than those who do not observe them. The inspired declarations, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "He that believeth on the Son hath life, but he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life,"\*—these declarations are as true as they would have been if there were no sacraments, and as true to those

\* John iii. 3, 36.

who observe the sacraments as to those who do not—nay, I ought rather to say that these and the like declarations *are all the more confidently to be received as true, because we have the sacraments given us in confirmation of them.* For it is, as I before observed, the very object of the sacraments, considered as seals of the covenant of grace, to ratify that covenant, *just as it is*, without any lowering or lessening of its requirements.\*

But here it may be asked, *What, then, is the use of baptism*,—more particularly as administered to infants, who are incapable of understanding its symbolical import,—if it does not effectually convey, or assuredly pledge and seal, to all its recipients the blessings of the Gospel?

To this question we may give substantially the same answer which Paul gives to a like question respecting circumcision. For immediately after he had stated, in a passage already quoted, that “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter;” he supposes the inquiry to be made, “*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?*” And to this question he gives the following brief but satisfactory reply, “*Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*”† A somewhat similar answer may be given to the inquiry, “What advantage have all baptised persons?” Their baptism does not infallibly introduce them into the *true spiritual church of the redeemed*. But it certainly does introduce them, or rather recognise them as already belonging to the visible Church—admits them to its outward privileges and advantages—brings them within the sphere of its influences and means of grace—and opens to them a wide door, whereby, through divine grace, they may come to the attainment of all its spiritual and heavenly blessings. It further solicits for them at the Lord’s hands, in one of the most sacred ordinances of His appointment, those renovating and sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit, of which it is at once the visible

\* See Note Q.

† Rom. iii. 1, 2.



emblem and the sacred pledge. In the special case of infants, it still further secures for them the imposition of a solemn obligation on their parents to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And although we dare not affirm that in all cases baptism is unfailingly accompanied with regenerating and adopting grace, we have no reason to doubt that in some cases it is so. Nor is there any reason why we may not venture to say, in the cautious and well-considered language of our Confession of Faith, that "the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (*whether of age or infants*) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time."

Who those persons are "to whom this grace belongeth," or on whom it is God's purpose in His own time to confer it—is, of course, a question which we have no means of answering. Our ignorance, however, in regard to this "secret thing," is no reason why we should not administer baptism to such as make a credible profession, and also to their children, any more than it is a reason for excluding them from the use of any other ordinances or means of grace, of all which it may be truly said, no less than of baptism, that their actual efficacy is limited to those persons to whom it is God's secret purpose to render them effectual. No one is so unreasonable as to insist that we must either hold the preaching of the Gospel to be *unfailingly efficacious* for the spiritual benefit of all who hear it, or else that we must set aside the preaching of the Gospel as *entirely useless*! Equally unreasonable is it to maintain, that if we do not hold baptism to be unfailingly efficacious in imparting spiritual blessings to all who outwardly receive it, then we may be fairly challenged to dispense with it, as of no real virtue or efficacy whatsoever.

When baptism is administered, we are instructed in our 'Directory for Worship' to offer up prayer to this or the like effect: "That the Lord, who hath not left us as strangers with-

out the covenant of promise, but called us to the privileges of His ordinances, would graciously vouchsafe to sanctify and bless His own ordinance of baptism at this time: that He would join the inward baptism of His Spirit with the outward baptism of water, and make this baptism to the infant a seal of adoption, remission of sin, regeneration, and eternal life, and all other promises of the covenant of grace; that the child may be planted into the likeness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that, the body of sin being destroyed in him, he may serve God in newness of life all his days."

Who will venture to say that such a prayer, offered up by a Christian congregation in behalf of a young child when received into its fellowship, can be of no possible advantage in the way of securing for him, either then or afterwards, the grace of the Holy Spirit who worketh when and how He willet?

And if it be here urged that this prayer is merely an *accompaniment* of baptism, and no part of the ordinance itself, I answer that, apart from this or any similar prayer that may be used on the occasion, the very act of administering the sacrament is in itself of the nature of a prayer that God would have respect to that covenant which is sealed by it in behalf of the child to whom it is administered. In no character short of this can it be reasonably regarded. For what is it that is done when a person is baptised? One of Christ's ministers, acting by His authority, in the presence and with the concurrence of a Christian assemblage, applies to the baptised person the appointed seal of the evangelical promises, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The three Persons of the Godhead are here solemnly invoked to confer on the recipient of the ordinance the blessings represented by it; and, apart from such invocation, the accompanying *action*, whereby the appointed token of the covenant is applied, is nothing less than a *symbolical prayer*. For prayer, being "the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will," may be expressed in significant action as well as in articulate words. And hence we may truly say, that in baptising a person we are virtually praying that God would confer

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upon him the spiritual blessings of which his baptism is significant. And when it is further considered that the supplicatory action which we thus perform is no other than the Lord himself has expressly appointed as a token and pledge of the unchangeableness of His covenant, our performance of the action cannot otherwise be regarded than as what Isaiah calls "pleading with God, and putting Him in remembrance"\* of His own plighted mercies; and may, therefore, if done "in faith, nothing wavering," be expected to draw down a special blessing from on high.

It is much to be regretted that the extreme jealousy that is felt among us of anything like the notion of an *opus operatum* in this sacrament should have disposed many to fall into the opposite error of wellnigh denying any efficacy to baptism as a means of imparting spiritual benefits to those who receive it, and of regarding it in no higher light than that of a mere form of admission into the visible Church. The prevalence of such low views of the efficacy of baptism is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of its proving efficacious. If we wish it to be attended with a blessing, we must expect a blessing; whereas if we regard it, and allow our people to regard it, as no better than a decent form, we are taking the most effectual method of securing that it shall be in our experience a decent form, and nothing more. But why should we be so inordinately afraid of superstitious views being entertained of this ordinance as to dread the ascription to it of its full value as a means of grace? Let us maintain as earnestly as we can that "grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to this sacrament as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all who are baptised are undoubtedly regenerated;" but let us be not the less firmly persuaded on that account, that "by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and imparted by the Holy Ghost, to such as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will in His appointed time."

\* Isa. xliii. 26.



## LECTURE XII.

### PRIVILEGES AND DUTIES OF THE SONS OF GOD.

THERE are still some departments of that interesting subject with which in the preceding Lectures we have been occupied, on which it is necessary to make a few remarks. I allude to the peculiar *privileges and advantages* of which the adopted sons of God are made partakers, and to the corresponding *obligations* that are imposed on them.

Of their *privileges*, we may confidently say, that they are so great that it is impossible to overestimate them ; and, happily, they are at the same time so obvious as scarcely to leave room for controversy with respect to them. They are no other, indeed, than must unavoidably be suggested by the most cursory reflection on the nature of that relation to their heavenly Father into which they have been brought.

1. Need I observe, for example, that God's children have the fullest security that all their wants shall be supplied ? To provide for a man's own offspring is the dictate of natural affection as well as of religious principle. And he who adopts a child comes under an obligation to act towards him in this respect a father's part. Accordingly, those who are received into the family of God may confidently expect from Him all things that are necessary or truly conducive to their welfare. They have no certainty, indeed, that riches and honours and luxuries shall in His providence be conferred upon them ; for infinite wisdom may see that such things, instead of being

beneficial, would be perilous and injurious to them; but of this they are assured, that every temporal blessing which the wisest, and at the same time the richest and kindest, of Fathers sees to be expedient for them, shall in nowise be withheld. And however scanty may be their store of earthly goods, they have God's welcome to it, and God's blessing upon it; and with these, in the veriest depths of poverty, they are rich indeed. But it is chiefly in ministering to their spiritual wants that His fatherly care and bounty are displayed. Here He is especially pledged to "supply all their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."\* Whatever it be that is suited to their exigencies,—instruction, guidance, strength, encouragement, peace, or consolation,—they have but to ask it of Him and it shall be given; for He is ready to "make all grace abound toward them, that they always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."†

2. Parental chastening is another of their privileges. To those indeed who judge according to their natural feelings, this may appear unworthy to be so regarded; for "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." But though an apparent grievance, it is a real blessing; for in due time "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness."‡ It is mistaken lenity in an earthly parent to withhold the sharp discipline which is often necessary to check the wayward inclinations, and to correct the perverse dispositions, of his children. Not such is the wise and considerate love of our Father in heaven. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"§

3. Again, it is the privilege of the sons of God to have free access to Him, and intimate communion with Him. It is by a peculiarly close and endearing tie that parent and child are

\* Philip. iv. 19.

‡ Heb. xii. 11.

† 2 Cor. ix. 8.

§ Heb. xii. 6, 7.

bound to one another, and peculiarly intimate is the fellowship that subsists between them. The great God, indeed, is so highly exalted above us, by reason of His incomparable majesty, and still more of His immaculate holiness, that it might seem to be unwarranted presumption in creatures so weak and sinful to approach Him. But he has Himself encouraged us to draw nigh as children to a father, able and ready to help us. He invites us to come to Him, to walk with Him, to trust to Him, to cast all our cares upon Him, to consign all our interests to Him. And as often as the thought of our nothingness and unworthiness might lead us to shrink from His awful and majestic presence, the name of *Father*, which He has taught us to apply to Him, dispels our fears, revives our confidence, and emboldens us with unreserved freedom to pour out before Him the desires of our hearts,—remembering those gracious words whereon He has taught us to hope, that “if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, much more will our father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him.”

4. Closely akin to that which I have just noticed, is another precious privilege of the sons of God; namely, the imparting to them of a filial spirit. “Because ye are sons,” it is written, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts:”\* “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”† This is one respect in which the divine adoption far excels that which is human. Men, by adopting children, can give them the name and place and outward privileges of sonship, but nothing more. While changing the state of the persons thus favoured, by translating them from one family into another, they cannot produce any corresponding change in their dispositions. But what men cannot do, God is able to accomplish. Along with the filial state, He imparts also the filial spirit. As often as He receives sinful men into His family, He brings their minds into harmony

\* Gal. iv. 6.

† Rom. viii. 15.



with their new condition. He changes the heart of the bond-man into that of a child. He inspires them with that love which casteth out fear. He teaches them to esteem His service as perfect freedom, and to run with an enlarged heart in the way of His commandments.

5. It need scarcely be added that another of their privileges is the hope of a glorious inheritance in the world to come. Children, by the law of nature and of nations, inherit the possessions and dignities of their parents. And in this respect, a son by adoption possesses the same rights as a son by natural descent. It is even so with those who are received into the family of God. "If children," says an apostle, "then are they heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."\* An inheritance awaits them, in comparison with which all the treasures and honours of the world are insignificant,—“an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven.”† Accordingly, their ultimate and full attainment of this inheritance is emphatically styled by St Paul “*the adoption*,” when he represents the children of God, “who have received the first fruits of the Spirit,” as “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies,”‡—in other words, as longing for the time when, being raised in triumph from the grave, they shall be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

Such are the privileges of God's adopted children. They are evidently no other than are necessarily implied in that gracious relation to Him into which they have been brought. And the very use of the term *adoption*, to signify their admission into that relation, encourages them to look for the enjoyment of these privileges, not merely as a boon which God, of His great benignity, may probably or reasonably be expected to confer upon them, but as the sure fulfilment of federal engagements and stipulations, to which, according to the ana-

\* Rom. viii. 17.

† 1 Peter i. 4.

‡ Rom. viii. 23.

logy of an adopting parent, He has fully and faithfully pledged Himself in their behalf.

But here, again, it is necessary to advert to the views of the author I have so frequently before referred to.

He holds that such manifestations of "benignant graciousness" on the part of God in His dealings with believers, as those which I have now indicated, cannot *in themselves* be regarded as of a *fatherly* character; nor, consequently, can the enjoyment of them be regarded as *in itself* implying the possession of *filial* privileges by those who are partakers of them.

"A general notion," he says, "of benignant graciousness on the part of God may, as regards its actings and manifestations, be broken up, as it were, into details. The analogy of the human family may suggest a variety of particular instances. The subject is often treated in this way. God is represented as discharging many different offices towards His people, all of them indicative and expressive of an affection like that of a parent: such as putting upon them His name; giving them access always to His throne; pitying, protecting, and providing for them; chastening and correcting them; keeping them safe till they reach heaven at last. But to a large extent *these may be all classed as benignant offices of government, and of government merely*. They all, however, stand out in a new light, and become far more clear, specific, and well defined, when they are viewed in connection with *the true and proper* fatherhood of God, as distinguished from what I may be allowed to call the *analogical*." \*

The assertion here advanced, that the "benignant offices" referred to are, to a large extent, purely *governmental*, and not, in themselves considered, *parental* in their character, is set forth as if it were a self-evident proposition, without any attempt, either in the way of argument or of illustration, to establish it. I venture to think, however, that it is far from being self-evident. On the contrary, I hold that if such actings as have been referred to may be classed as mere offices of government, and not of fatherhood, there must then be no definite line of distinction that can be drawn between

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 254.

the proper actings of an affectionate parent and a beneficent ruler.

It is true that when we speak of these offices as *fatherly*, and of the persons who are benefited by them as enjoying *filial* privileges, we are using terms "suggested by the analogy of a human family." But what of this, if the analogy be a just one? If it be so we are fully warranted to make use of it. Indeed, there is no other way, as I have repeatedly observed, in which the great God can be represented to our minds at all, except through the use of human analogies or similitudes. Now, that the analogy in question is a just one, has been elsewhere fully admitted by this very author, who here speaks so slightly of what he styles the "analogical fatherhood of God, as distinguished from His true and proper fatherhood." For in a passage which I have already had occasion to quote he says, "There can be little doubt that the analogy is a natural and so far a valid one. The relation of son and father on earth is fitted, and probably in its original constitution intended, to suggest the idea of a similar relation between earth and heaven."\*

It is doing great injustice to our argument, however, to represent it as merely founded on analogy. We have not only "the analogy of the human family" to build upon when speaking of the benefits above referred to as "filial privileges," but *the clear and unequivocal statements of Holy Scripture, that all true believers are the adopted sons of God*, and consequently that they are warranted to expect from Him such treatment as every adopting parent among men is pledged to bestow on the children of his adoption. Surely we may say, that in the light of these assurances of God's adopting grace which are given us in His Word, His gracious and benignant offices towards believers assume an aspect of "true and proper fatherhood," as "clear, specific, and well defined" as could be wished.

But this is not all. For it so happens that one and all of those filial privileges of which we have been speaking, are not

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 113.



only attributed in Scripture to believers, but are so attributed to them *under the character of filial privileges* which God, as their heavenly Father, has conferred upon them. Thus, does He pity them? It is "like as a father pitieth his children." \* Does He spare them? It is "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." † Does He provide for them all things that are necessary? It is because as "their heavenly Father, He knoweth that they have need of these things." ‡ Does He chasten and correct them? It is as the "Father of their spirits," who "scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." § Does He give them freedom and confidence in approaching Him? It is "because they are sons, into whose hearts He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son, crying, Abba, Father." || Does He reserve for them an inheritance in heaven? It is because, being sons, "they are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." ¶ Thus does it appear that in ascribing these and suchlike benefits to the children of God *as filial privileges*, we are using no analogies taken from the human relationship further than the Scriptures of divine truth have suggested to us. And such being the case, it seems to me astonishing that our representation of these privileges should be held to contain little or nothing that is clearly, specifically, and definitely characteristic of true sonship, when we thus find that not only its general outlines, but its minute details, are set forth as filial by the express authority of the Word of God.

But here it may be satisfactory to consider, *what it is* that the author referred to represents as *the grand and distinctive peculiarity* of the heavenly sonship, to which all its preciousness and blessedness must be traced. It is no other than "*the perfect and inviolable security*," which pertains to the filial relationship of God's children, as participating in the sonship of the Only-begotten of the Father. All other relations are mutable and uncertain. But sonship, as thus constituted, is inviolable and eternal.

\* Ps. ciii. 13.

§ Heb. xii. 6.

† Mal. iii. 17.

|| Gal. iv. 6.

‡ Mat. vi. 32.

¶ Rom. viii. 17.

"This," he says, "is the peculiar benefit of sonship ; this is its great radical, distinctive, characteristic property. It puts an end conclusively to probation, in every sense and in every form. It secures permanence of position in the household or family of God." He admits that, "apart from sonship altogether, God's act of free grace in justifying those who believe is held to carry with it, as a consequence, the inviolable security of the justified ;" and that, "by the purpose of God, expressed in His promises, it does so." But He maintains that "there is nothing in or about our standing as justified persons, considered simply in itself, to secure infallibly that we shall preserve it and hold it fast. Although God is able to secure this, and is moreover graciously pledged to secure it ; yet, for aught we know, His way of securing it may be just through our receiving the adoption of sons. For let the relation in which we stand to God as subjects and servants be taken at its very best, as it subsists in the case of justified believers, there is still to be desiderated in it the element or condition of absolute inviolability."\* But this element is held to be supplied so soon as we receive the adoption of sons, whereby there is infallibly secured to us a fixed and abiding position in the divine household.

Before proceeding to notice those passages of Scripture which have been appealed to in confirmation of this statement, I may make a few general observations on the statement itself. The purport of it is, that adoption is distinguished from other evangelical blessings, and in particular from justification, by having in it *per se* an element of inviolable security ; that though our tenure of other blessings, if we are true believers, be in point of fact absolutely certain, this does not arise, as in the case of adoption, from anything permanent "in or about" the blessings themselves, but from the purpose and promise of God to secure them to us ; and that, for aught we know, God's way of securing them to us may be just by conjoining with them the adoption of sons, which is alone fixed and indefectible in its very nature.

On this statement I may venture to remark, that adoption, *as such*, cannot be considered as having in it any "element of inviolable security," more than justification and other evan-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 261, 263, 264, 265.

gelical blessings, apart from the sure grounds of the covenant of grace on which it rests. A son who proves incorrigible may be driven from his father's house, no less than may a subject, who proves disloyal and rebellious, be banished from his sovereign's kingdom. This is fully admitted by the author whose theory we are considering.

"A son's standing," he says, "in his earthly parent's house, is not absolutely and inviolably secure. He may go out, or he may be thrust out. It is true, he is not strictly speaking upon trial; the right to be at home with his father is not, in the ordinary sense of the term, conditional. Still it may be forfeited, or it may be despised and practically renounced: he may be tempted and may fall, and that irrecoverably. If our standing as sons in the divine household is imagined to be at the very best simply like my son's standing in my house, it is not divested of the condition of precariousness. There may be more safeguards in the one case than in the other. God is able to take more care of His children than I can take of mine: that, however, is only a difference of degree; some insecurity, be it more or less, still attaches to the relation; and if those called to be sons, in the sense now supposed to be put upon sonship, have seen others as good and strong as themselves fall, or if they have themselves fallen and been with difficulty recovered, I can see no reason why, even in the holy heavenly home, they may not be haunted by the apprehension that possibly after all they may be cast away." \*

If such be the case, it is evident that adoption, *merely as such*, does not imply absolute security. Some other consideration, not necessarily involved in the notion of sonship, must be taken into account, in order to impart to it this most important element. In the case of the Only-begotten of the Father, indeed, His sonship, being constituted not by creation or adoption, but in some inconceivable manner by eternal generation, and being specifically distinguished from all other sonships by that participation in the divine substance which is included in it, is necessarily eternal and unchangeable, as those divine persons are between whom it subsists. But, as we have al-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 262, 263.



ready seen, this monogenetic sonship is incapable of being shared in by any created being. There is, indeed, another sonship which Christ sustains, as the perfect man after the similitude of unfallen Adam, and in regard to which it is the hope and aim of all true believers to be conformed to Him. But the permanence and security attendant on *this* relation, which we may be allowed to call His *human* sonship, must be traced, not to anything inherent in the relation itself, but to the absolute sinlessness of His human nature, and to the divine strength and perfect excellence imparted to it, as "sanctified and anointed by the Holy Spirit above measure." The same may be said of the sonship of believers, when, "in and for Christ," they are adopted into the family of God. Their position in their Father's house is thenceforward inviolably secure. But it is so, not in consequence of anything essentially more certain and permanent in adoption itself than in any of the other benefits conferred upon them, but in consequence of the sure foundation that has been laid for *all* their privileges in the finished work of Christ, the indissoluble nature of their union with the Saviour through the never-failing grace of the Holy Spirit imparted to them, and the firm and unalterable provisions of that covenant of grace in which all spiritual and heavenly blessings are secured to them.

But further, and more particularly in reference to *justification*, I cannot admit that this evangelical blessing stands on any different footing from adoption, as regards the permanence of the tenure by which we hold it. It may be allowed that "there is nothing in or about our standing as justified persons, considered simply in itself, to secure that we shall infallibly preserve it." But when we consider it, not "simply in itself," but in connection with the ground on which it rests, *the perfect and all-sufficient righteousness of the Saviour*, there is, certainly, "in and about it" an element of stability which warrants us to say, in the language of our Confession of Faith, that "*God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified,*" and that "*they can never fall from the state of justification;*" or, in the more authoritative language of Holy

Scripture, that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

As for the suggestion, that "for anything that appears to the contrary, God's way of securing our standing as justified persons may be just through our receiving the adoption of sons," it seems to me to be utterly inadmissible. For *in Christ* the one standing is as permanent as the other; and, *apart from Christ*, there is no permanence in either. Even if God had not been pleased to superadd the blessing of adoption to that of justification, the latter would not have been on that account the less secure, as resting on that perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, in which, by a divinely originated and divinely sustained faith, we obtain a sure and indefeasible interest. And, on the other hand, we have seen that adoption itself has no inherent security in its own nature, more than belongs to any other blessing of the Gospel, apart from the grace of God, whereby we are continually preserved in union with Jesus Christ, through whom we are partakers of it. We dare not regard any one of the believer's privileges as furnishing in itself a secure tenure for the others. The words of the apostle are alike applicable to them all, "By faith ye stand;"\* "Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."†

Having made these general observations on the statement before us, let us now consider the scriptural evidence adduced in confirmation of it.

The passage which is confidently alleged as "settling the whole matter," is that remarkable statement of our Lord, when arguing with certain Jews about spiritual liberty, "The servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."‡

"He had just before said to them, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free:' to which they had rejoined, 'We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how

\* 2 Cor. i. 24.

† 1 Peter i. 5.

‡ John viii. 35, 36.

sayest thou, "Ye shall be made free"? They regarded our Lord's promise as casting an imputation on them—as implying that they were in a state of bondage. And this they disclaimed as inconsistent with their being 'Abraham's seed.' They held that, as being so, they were and always had been free—free, that is to say, in their standing before God, as being by national descent members of His family. Our Lord first meets them with an appeal to their own consciences: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' As if He had said, 'You can scarcely deny that you commit sin; so far you serve sin; it has dominion over you. Then you are not free, as you boast, to serve God only. You may be in God's house; but if so, it is not as being free in your relation to Him. For that you cannot be, while, committing sin, you are the servants of sin. Your position in the house can be only that of a servant.' He then tells them that such a position is at the best precarious and insecure; for 'the servant abideth not in the house for ever.' 'As a servant, he has no right to such a privilege; nor, indeed, has he any capacity for realising it. He is distracted between the claim upon him for undivided allegiance on the one hand, and his inclination towards compromise on the other. He can only be God's servant partially, having still a hankering after independence and self-will, which is the service of sin. Therefore "the servant abideth not in the house for ever." He cannot be sure of thus abiding, so long as he is a servant merely.' But then, He adds, 'The Son abideth ever.' 'I, as the Son, am free; and as the Son, I abide in the house for ever. Would you then have true freedom? Enter into the freedom which I have as the Son. "For if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."'

"Our Lord," it is argued, "clearly intends, in this reasoning, to represent His own sonship, and that alone, as absolutely insuring permanence of position in the house or family of His Father; and just as clearly does He indicate His willingness to share that sonship, and that feature or quality of it, with us."\*

Now, I am not disposed to question that the view here taken of the general import of this somewhat difficult passage is a correct one. It seems to have been the intention of our Lord to contrast, in respect of general permanence and security, the position of bondservants in a family with that of sons. Probably, as Bengel, Stier, and Alford suppose, He had

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 266, 267.



the same reference as Paul, in Gal. iv. 22, to Ishmael and Isaac, who were both of them sons of Abraham, the one by a bondmaid and the other by a freewoman; and of whom the Scripture had said, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." At all events, His purpose appears to have been to show the Jews that, notwithstanding their vain boast of being "Abraham's seed," they were still no better than spiritual bondmen in the house of God, requiring to be "made free through the knowledge of the truth."

Allowing, however, the substantial accuracy of the interpretation, there are some of its details which I am not prepared to admit; and still less am I disposed to acquiesce in the justice of the conclusion which is held to be deducible from it.

When, for example, it is said, in verse 35, "The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever," it may be made a question whether the word "*son*," as well as the word "*servant*," be used *generically*, to signify *any son*, or whether it be meant to denote specifically *the Son of God*. It is certainly most natural to take both expressions, as Stier and Alford propose to do, in a generic sense. And then the verse is to be understood as stating that the position of a son in the house of his earthly parent is *ordinarily or in the main* secure, in comparison with that of a servant,—without, however, implying that it is *in all cases* "*absolutely and inviolably secure*." For it is not the fact, nor does any one maintain it to be so, that the standing of *a son generically* (*i.e.*, of any and every son) in his father's house, is in all cases divested of the condition of precariousness. Although there be much about it that tends to promote its permanence, it may, notwithstanding, be perversely renounced or justly forfeited. On the other hand, if by "*the Son*" in this verse we are to understand "*the only-begotten Son of God*,"—which is the view held by Bengel, and apparently preferred by Tholuck,—then, indeed, His "abiding in the house for ever" is absolutely certain. But the certainty in this case must, I conceive, be held to arise from the incommunicable and unchangeable perfections of His

divine nature, in which other persons, who become the sons of God by creation or by adoption merely, cannot participate.

We are told, however, that in the immediately succeeding verse the Son of God, who is unquestionably the person there referred to, "clearly indicates His willingness to share with us His sonship, together with that feature or quality of absolute and inviolable security which pertains to it." For He there says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

It may be admitted that the freedom here promised by Him is such freedom as belongs to the standing or position of sonship. The connection of the statement with the preceding verses obviously requires us to put this construction upon it. I apprehend, however, that the sonship thus offered, in the enjoyment of which we shall be "free indeed," is not to be regarded as substantially the same with His sonship. *Analogous* they may be, but they cannot be called *identical*. The one is an original and inherent sonship, whereas the other is communicated or derived. The one subsists by a necessity of nature, while the other is constituted and upheld by a dispensation of grace. And if it be affirmed that at all events they are alike in respect of the common feature of *permanence* which belongs to them, the answer is obvious, that though alike permanent *in point of fact*, the *manner and ground* of their permanence are essentially different. The only-begotten Son "abideth" *of Himself*, as being, in the unchangeableness of His nature, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." On the other hand, the adopted sons "abide," *not of themselves, but through His grace continually upholding them*. There is no inherent stability in their standing *as adopted sons*, more than in their standing *as justified believers*. It is only the grace of Christ enabling them to "*abide in Him*," that renders their standing in either capacity secure and steadfast.

Another passage of Scripture that has been adduced in proof of the inherent permanence of the believer's sonship is that statement in 1 John iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth

not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Here, we are told, an assurance is given us that "those who, being born of God, are called His sons, have His seed remaining in them as the germ of an absolutely impeccable life, a nature or life incapable of sin. And thus we may see how, both in respect of its implying community of nature, and in respect of its implying community of relation, with Christ the Son, our sonship, securing our indefectibility by excluding the very possibility of sinning, thereby makes our abiding ever in the house absolutely certain." \*

Of course, when he speaks of the "impeccable life" of God's children, and of "the very possibility of their sinning as excluded," we must understand the meaning of the writer to be, that they do not and cannot sin *habitually, deliberately, and characteristically*, so as to fall away from a state of grace; or that such sins as they may commit are wholly to be ascribed to the remains of *the old man* which still survive in them, and not at all to *the new man* which is the product of regeneration. Otherwise, indeed, he would be making the apostle's doctrine to be utterly at variance with the history and experience of the most sincere believers, as well as with many express declarations of the Word of God. But apart from this necessary qualification of the apostle's statement, there is nothing in it that lends the slightest support to the position in behalf of which it is appealed to. It simply implies the general doctrine of the unfailing permanence of divine grace in those to whom it has been savingly imparted, whereby *all* their spiritual privileges are secured, and *all* their spiritual attainments are furthered and perpetuated. Their sonship of course partakes of that security which springs from the grace of God continually abiding in them. But it does not more fully and more effectually partake of it than does any of the other privileges pertaining to them.

The only other passage of Scripture that is adduced in proof of the inherent permanence of the believer's sonship, is that

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 270.



triumphant expression of assured confidence which occurs at the close of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, taken in connection with the references to the believer's sonship which are made in the preceding part of the same chapter.

There can be no doubt that, in the course of this chapter, there *are* various allusions to the privileges of the children of God—to their guidance by the Spirit, to their filial disposition, to their glorious liberty, to their heavenly inheritance, to their destined conformity to the image of the Eternal Son.\* But I see no reason why *these* should be singled out from all the other privileges mentioned in connection with them, as if they exclusively contributed to the apostle's confidence. Why may we not suppose him to have had a reference also to such other animating statements as the following—"There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death;" "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you;" "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose;" "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified,"†—statements which were just as well calculated as anything he says on the subject of adoption to draw from him that triumphant expression of confidence with which the chapter concludes? Indeed, it is in immediate connection with the last of these statements—"whom He did predestinate, them He also called," &c.—that he puts the question, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" and follows it up with the unanswerable appeal—"He that spared not *His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" There is no particular allusion to adoption *here*. The author indeed, whose theory we are controverting, inserts such an allusion in his

\* Rom. viii. 14, 15, 17, 21, 29.

† Rom. viii. 1, 2, 11, 23, 30.

comment on the passage. "The apostle," he says, "fixes on the side of both eternities the sacred chain that binds the earth to heaven above. Called as sinners, justified as believers, *glorified as sons*, so runs the climax. Whereupon there breaks forth the greatest perhaps of all the songs of inspiration, beginning with 'What shall we then say to these things?'"\* I need scarcely state, however, that this version of the climax, "*glorified as sons*," however well it may suit the author's purpose, is neither required nor warranted by the text.

But further, while there is thus no particular allusion to the sonship of believers in the beginning of this jubilant song, neither is there any such allusion in the sequel of it. For the song thus proceeds: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God who justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ who died? yea, rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us? And who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Here, you perceive, there is mention of election, mention of justification, mention of the death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of the Saviour; mention of the love of Christ, from which no trials can divide His people. But there is no mention of adoption, although doubtless in the earlier part of the chapter there had been allusions made to it as well as to other spiritual blessings.

I hold, therefore, that we have just as little ground from this passage, as from any of the other passages formerly noticed, for supposing that there is inherent in this privilege any element of "absolute and inviolable security" more than in the other privileges of the people of God. You will observe, however, that we do not deny that the evangelical sonship is permanent, *as a matter of fact*. On the contrary, we earnestly contend that it *is* permanent, not only in respect of the continuance of the relation itself, but in respect also of the inviol-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 275.

able security of its attendant blessings. And we hold that *its being so* is one of the chief excellences by which it is elevated above Adam's original sonship. We merely deny that it is *more* permanent than other evangelical privileges—that it is THE ONE permanent privilege of believers which, super-added to the others, renders them permanent also ; or, in short, that it has any necessary permanence *in its own nature*, apart from what, in common with other Christian privileges, it derives from the unchangeable certainty of the Divine purposes—the consummate perfection of the Saviour's mediatorial work, and the unfailing provisions and promises of that covenant of grace which is in all things well ordered and sure.

The error, as I conceive it to be, which has just been noticed in this author's theory is, I am persuaded, a very radical and important one. It seems to underlie all the other errors. I noticed at the outset, as a defect in his theory, that he did not lay down any definition of Fatherhood and Sonship ; but now, at the close, it appears that he had all the while something like a definition<sup>1</sup> on which he was proceeding. For he now says, " This is the peculiar benefit of sonship—this is its great, radical, distinctive, characteristic property—it puts an end conclusively to probation in every sense and in every form—it secures permanence of position in the household or family of God."

We cannot much wonder that, taking this view of the radical and distinctive property of sonship, he should have striven, on the one hand, to set aside the sonship of all men as God's rational and dependent creatures ; and, on the other hand, to identify the believer's sonship with that of the eternal and only-begotten Son of God. But yet we may well wonder that a view of the nature of sonship, leading to such consequences, should have been adopted on scriptural grounds so exceedingly slender as those which he has assigned for it.

Setting aside, then, this alleged " radical property" as not in reality pertaining to adoption more than to the other benefits of the Gospel, we fall back on the blessings and advantages already detailed as constituting the truly distinc-



tive privileges of the heavenly sonship. And of these I know no better summary that can be given than that which is contained in the following statement of our Confession of Faith:—

“All those that are justified God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption; by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.” \*

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I must not omit to notice, however, in conclusion, that the sonship of believers, like every other relation into which as reasonable and moral creatures we may be brought, necessarily involves in it *duties* as well as privileges; and that we cannot be partakers of the latter without contracting an obligation to discharge the former. What these duties are must be evident on the slightest reflection—they spring so evidently from the nature of the relation that there seems scarcely to be a possibility of misconceiving them.

If it be the acknowledged duty of a child *to honour, love, and obey* his earthly parent, much more is it incumbent on the children of God to render with all fidelity the like duty to their Father in heaven. For certainly there is no parent so greatly to be revered as He—no one who has dealt so kindly and bountifully with us, no one who possesses so full a title to the affection of our hearts and the homage of our lives; and hence it would be inexcusable perversity that His paramount claims should be rejected or ignored, while the claims

\* See Note R.

of others, incomparably inferior, are cheerfully owned and habitually complied with.

There is one mode in which the veneration of children for a parent is commonly evinced, and in which it well becomes the sons of God to follow them; and that is, by selecting him as their pattern, and striving, as far as they can, *to imitate or resemble him*. Accordingly, Christians are admonished in the Scriptures to be “followers of God, as dear children;” to “be merciful, as their Father also is merciful;” to “be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect;” and “as obedient children, not to fashion themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance, but to be holy in all manner of conversation, even as He who hath called them is holy.”\* And certainly there is no parent so worthy of imitation as He who is the source of all goodness and the perfection of all excellence. It is only as we become more and more conformed to Him that we rise towards the true dignity and happiness of our being.

*Filial trust* in God is another duty incumbent on those whom He adopts into His family; the very name *Father* dispels fear and inspires confidence. And yet it is but little that the best of men, who bear this endearing name, are able to do for us. In our greatest emergencies we should often be left without relief if we had no better father than they on whom to rely. But when the great God ranks us among His children, what is there that we may not look for at His hands? In whom shall we confide if not in such a Father? To whom can we so cheerfully consign our cares and intrust our interests as to Him, who is no less able than He is willing to do for us “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”? His promise is ever sure, that, “If men, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, much more shall our Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him;” and, trusting in this promise, it becomes us to “be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and

\* Eph. v. 1; Luke vi. 36; Mat. v. 48; 1 Peter i. 14, 15.

supplication with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto Him: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

*Filial submission* to the chastening of God is another duty incumbent on His children. They know that their severest afflictions come from a Father's hand, and are sent to them, not in wrath, but in mercy, as a salutary discipline tending to their good. This consideration is fitted, if anything be, to reconcile them to the endurance of the hardest trials; for there is an unanswerable force in the apostle's argument, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness."\*

Farther, we may draw from the thought of our heavenly sonship a powerful motive to abstinence from base pursuits, sordid pleasures, and unworthy companionships, and to the maintenance of a dignity of character and loftiness of sentiment suited to our high vocation. Even a heathen philosopher could thus argue: "If any one were duly affected with the opinion that we are all originally descended from God as our Father, he would not, I suppose, conceive anything mean or ignoble concerning himself. If Cæsar should adopt thee, thou wouldst be greatly elated; and if then thou knowest that thou art a son of God, much more ought this to elevate thy mind."† To the same effect another learned heathen remarks: "It is useful for states that valiant men should believe

\* Heb. xii. 5-10.

† Epictetus.



themselves to be born of the gods, although it be false, in order that their minds, thus assured of their divine extraction, may the more boldly undertake great enterprises, pursue them the more earnestly, and hence accomplish them the more successfully, from the security and confidence which this belief produces."\* If heathens thus estimated the dignity of a divine sonship, it ought not surely to be less esteemed by those who are children of God by faith in His beloved Son, and "if children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." It becomes them to shrink from aught that would be disparaging to the character they sustain, and the destiny they have in prospect. "Beloved," we may say to them, in the words of an apostle—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."†

Finally, it becomes those who are partakers of the heavenly sonship, to show their high estimation of its preciousness by the habitual gladness and cheerfulness of disposition with which the thought of it is fitted to inspire them. To "joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ" is the duty, no less than the privilege, of believers. And if a Christian at any time allows himself to be harassed with cares, or overwhelmed with griefs, or cast down by gloomy and desponding imaginations, he may justly be considered as walking unworthily of the high vocation wherewith he is called. The question put of old to a disconsolate Jewish prince may with much greater emphasis be put to such a Christian, "Why art thou, being the king's son, growing lean from day to day?"‡ For certainly of all men *he* has the least excuse for suffering any causes of disquietude to prey upon him, who can call himself a son of the very King of kings, and who knows that, by the gracious providence of his Father in heaven, all things work together for his good. Whatever reasons the children of God

\* Varro.

† 1 John iii. 2, 3.

‡ 2 Sam. xiii. 4.

may have, or think that they have, at any time for being sorrowful, they have always far greater reasons for being joyful. No outward losses can rob them of their blessed portion as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Nor can any of "the sufferings of this present time" be deemed "worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." Hence it is a just description that is given of them, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." And it is a reasonable injunction that is laid upon them, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice."





# A P P E N D I X



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### I.

#### REPLY TO THE STRICTURES OF DR CANDLISH.

It is due alike to Dr Candlish and to myself that I should specially notice his Strictures on the preceding Lectures, contained in the Preliminary Essay prefixed to the third edition of his work on the Fatherhood of God. In doing so, I shall arrange my observations under the head of the several Lectures to which they refer.

#### LECTURE I.

Dr Candlish begins by charging me with “a studious endeavour to create a prejudice against him at the outset, by ostentatiously proclaiming the alleged novelty of his views,” and with “using an art of controversy unworthy of me—the art indicated by the homely proverb, ‘Give a dog a bad name, &c.’” He complains also that “apparently I throw upon him the responsibility of raising speculations and controversies fitted to disturb the peace of the Church” (p. 5).

I did, indeed, speak of his views as “of a very novel and startling kind.” And in so doing, I am much mistaken if I have not the concurrence of the vast majority of those who have expressed any opinion regarding them. Nay, I may venture to claim even his own concurrence, inasmuch as, in his last Lecture, he has spoken of the Westminster standards as being, in regard to adoption, “in the last degree vague and indefinite,” leaving “the whole of this depart-



ment of theology an entirely open question, a perfect *tabula rasa*," and has claimed for himself "the fullest liberty to *sink new shafts in this evidently unexplored mine*;" while, in the latter part of the Preface to his first edition (which, however, when reprinting the Preface, he has now omitted), he evidently anticipated that his views would be considered as not only "novel" but "startling," when stating that "whatever may be at first sight *startling* to some minds in his manner of treating the subject, can be fairly estimated only when his whole reasoning is examined;" and again, I find him stating (3d edition, p. 212), "I am aware that the views I have been submitting may seem *startling* to some minds."

Such being the case, it is not at all wonderful that I should have recognised the *newness* of the "shafts" which he was striving to sink, and should have applied his own epithet of "startling" to his manner of treating the subject. I utterly disclaim, however, the imputation that in so doing I was "studiously endeavouring to create a prejudice against him from the outset," or "throwing upon him the responsibility of raising speculations and controversies fitted to disturb the peace of the Church." On the contrary, I expressly stated at the outset that his principles "are unfolded in a highly interesting and effective manner, and are vindicated with a remarkable degree of subtlety and ingenuity;" that "they are well entitled to our serious attention;" and that "*they are calculated to do good service to the cause of truth, by turning the attention of theologians to a subject which, it must be confessed, has not as yet been adequately discussed*." Indeed, if I were inclined to retaliate, I might with some justice complain of Dr Candlish for "studiously endeavouring from the outset to create a prejudice against myself," by ascribing to me, without the shadow of evidence—nay, rather in spite of the clearest opposing evidence—a discreditable motive and an "unworthy art of controversy."

2. Dr Candlish makes no reply to my remarks, contained in page 15 of this volume, on his attempt to deduce God's exclusive relation of sovereignty to His intelligent creatures from the fact of His having created them. I adhere, therefore, with all the more confidence to my position, that this argument is worthless, in respect that it is so constructed as carefully to exclude from the premises every element which could possibly have led to any other than the desired conclusion.

In regard to my endeavour, in pages 16 and 17 of this volume, to show that, by a like argument otherwise constructed, a different

conclusion might be reached, I am not careful to repel the assertion of its invalidity. For, as I expressly stated at the close of it, "I have little confidence in such reasonings, whether as regards the divine sovereignty or the divine fatherhood; esteeming it a much safer and more becoming course to observe the manner in which God actually deals with us, and thence to infer the relations which He bears to us, than to attempt, by any speculative arguments, to determine that such and such relations must necessarily be sustained, and that such and such procedure must necessarily be observed by Him."

In my subsequent endeavour (p. 17, 18) to follow this cautious inductive process, Dr Candlish observes that "my whole reasoning is of the vaguest possible sort," and that "it proceeds entirely on the assumption of God's general benevolence" (Candlish, 3d ed., p. 11). The *first* of these statements is a mere assertion, in reply to which it is sufficient to remark that the reasoning denounced as "of the vaguest possible sort" is of precisely the same kind with that by which the best writers on natural theology have sought to establish the fact of God's moral government. The *second* of the above statements is altogether inaccurate. For any one who looks at my argument can hardly fail to see that it proceeds, not only on the general benevolence of God, but also on observed facts in the nature or constitution of man.

3. Dr Candlish speaks in very glowing terms of the much higher position occupied by the intelligent creature, when viewed merely as a responsible subject, than when held to be, on the footing of creation, a son of God. "A well-defined relation," he says, "is constituted, and one that at once places the intelligent creature, simply as such, on a footing of far truer and nobler affinity to his Maker than Dr Crawford's description of original sonship, even if stretched to the utmost, will allow. He stands out as one with whom the Most High God may confer as, in some respects, an independent person; to whom God says, Thou shalt or thou shalt not, and who himself in reply can say, I will or I will not. *That* is his high standing—a standing which admits of intercourse on terms all but equal, and into which all conceivable kinds of mutual confidence, sympathy, and esteem may be infused" (p. 9). "I hold the divine will," he continues, "to be the law of love, and the divine image in the creature to be the harmony of his moral nature with that law, understood and owned by him as the law of his creature-relationship to the Creator" (p. 10). Again he says (p. 11), "I go as far as Dr

Crawford does in asserting ‘an evident excess and exuberance of divine bounty, far beyond aught that mere equity or justice on the part of a sovereign ruler could have dictated.’” And afterwards (p. 79), speaking still of the same primitive relation, he says, “In its origin and nature it is a very high and holy one, and if preserved in its integrity it is capable of indefinite development. From the first it admits of fellowship of the closest and most intimate sort, altogether friendly, and having much in common with what is filial. And it tends towards the filial—it culminates naturally in the filial.”

I cannot help thinking that, by these statements, the question between us is reduced to an exceedingly narrow issue. If, in God’s dealings with His intelligent creatures, there be “an evident excess and exuberance of bounty, far beyond aught that mere equity or justice on the part of a sovereign ruler could have dictated”—if “the law of man’s creature-relationship to his Creator be the law of love”—if he occupies with respect to God “a high standing, which *admits of intercourse on terms all but equal, and into which all conceivable kinds of mutual confidence, sympathy, and esteem may be infused*”—and if, in fine, his relation to God be “a very high and holy one, capable of indefinite development, and *from the first admitting of the closest fellowship, altogether friendly, and having much in common with what is filial*”—I know not what further evidence can be desiderated to show the original subsistence of what may be justly called a paternal and filial relation between God and man. And it seems strange that any one should deem it worth his while to contend against the mere use of the word “sonship,” as applied to God’s intelligent creatures, when these creatures are held by him to stand “on a footing of far truer and nobler affinity to their Maker than Dr Crawford’s description of original sonship, even if stretched to the utmost, will allow.”

It may possibly be thought that, in coming to this conclusion, I have somewhat misconceived the statements of Dr Candlish. But if so, he will doubtless extend towards me the same indulgence as when he is good enough to say of me (p. 10), “I acquit him, however, of intentional misrepresentation; for he labours throughout, as it seems to me, under an utter inability to comprehend the dignity and glory of service.” I fear, indeed, that, according to his showing, I have no alternative but to plead guilty to the *latter* charge. For I have been wont to form my conception of the relation of a *servant*, as contrasted with that of a *friend*, much more with that of a *son*, from those memorable words of our Lord to His disciples,



“Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”\*

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## LECTURE II.

“The argument from Scripture,” says Dr Candlish, “is meagre enough, if the point to be proved be fairly considered ; for the idea of a general fatherhood introduces into the original relation of intelligent creatures to their Creator an element, not given in the necessary *a priori* intuition of reason and free will, like the sense of rule and responsibility, but confessedly springing out of an *a posteriori* analogical inference from a human tie, which did not exist, and could scarcely be conceived, when angels were tried and fell, or when man himself was tried and fell. To support such a theory, strong scriptural evidence is surely needed. What Dr Crawford alleges is of the weakest sort” (p. 12).

Dr Candlish forgets, when making this statement, that, besides “the sense of rule and responsibility,” there are other instincts and appetencies of a religious tendency, betokening our affinity to the Father of our spirits. And he also forgets that angels and unfallen man might be fully cognisant of the existence and blessedness of that endearing relation which God sustained towards them, and which *we* now denominate *Fatherhood*, although *they could not apply to it that analogical term*, while as yet the human tie, which suggests the term, had no existence. What we are concerned with is the *original subsistence* of the relationship, and not the mere *name* by which, as originally subsisting, it might be denoted.

1. In regard to my first text, Mal. ii. 10, Dr Candlish observes, that “the force of the prophet’s appeal turns, not on the universal fatherhood of God as regards mankind generally, but on his special fatherhood with reference to His chosen people Israel.” It may be so ; but not the less on this account does the passage recognise and sanction a principle on which God’s common fatherhood may be established. “Have we not all one Father?” says the prophet ; “hath not one God created us ?” Here there is an evident paral-

\* John xv. 15.

lelism between the character of God as our Father and as our Creator. And this parallelism, though specially applied to the case of Israel, is, from the terms of it, equally applicable to all mankind.

2. My second scriptural argument was founded on Heb. xii. 9, in which there is a marked contrast between the "fathers of our flesh" and "the Father of spirits," and from which (as confirmed by four other texts) I inferred that, while our corporeal frame proceeds by ordinary generation from our earthly parents, the nobler part of our constitution, the immortal soul, is directly communicated to us by the Creator, so as to be in a peculiar sense His offspring.

Dr Candlish observes, "This may or may not be; and it may or may not be proved by the other texts referred to," and to which he makes no farther allusion. But in regard to Heb. xii. 9, he insists that it is applicable "exclusively to believers, whose Father God is in a truly spiritual sense;" and that "Paul had too much sense, and was too thorough a master of tender and persuasive reasoning, to be giving a lesson in natural psychology to mourners needing spiritual consolation" (p. 13).

Certain it is, however, that the majority of commentators, including Calvin, Beza, Wetstein, Ernesti, Owen, and Alford, did not esteem it any disparagement of the good sense and persuasive reasoning of the apostle, to support that interpretation of this text which I have adopted. Owen's comment is as follows: "Whereas the apostle here distributes our nature into its two essential parts, the flesh and the spirit; it is evident that by the 'spirit' the rational soul is intended. For although the flesh also be a creature of God, yet is natural generation used as a means for its production, but the soul is immediately created and infused, *having no other Father but God himself*, see Num. xvi. 22; Zech. xii. 1; Jer. xxxviii. 16. I will not deny that the signification of the word may be farther extended, so as to comprise also the state and frame of our spirits in their restoration and rule, wherein also they are subject to God alone; but *His being the immediate Creator of them is regarded in the first place.*"

Dr Candlish is too hasty when he says, at the close of the Preface to his third edition, "I claim Owen as on my side."

3. Respecting my third scriptural argument, founded on the account given of man's original creation, as "made in the image of God, after His own likeness," Dr Candlish affirms, "It is a mere *petitio principii*; to give it even the semblance of logical reasoning,

he is obliged to assume the very point to be proved, the original fatherhood of God as respects His intelligent creatures" (p. 14).

This is a strange mistake. The alleged *petitio principii* does not apply to my argument at all, the greater part of which he has not attempted to meet, but to a mere incidental remark I had made in the course of the argument! Referring to an assertion of Dr Candlish, that "intelligent responsibility is the only thing involved in man's creation after the image of God that has any bearing on the primary relation between God and man," I had said that "*he assumes here the very point in question*, namely, that the primary relation between God and man is simply and exclusively that of Ruler." And *in order to show that he does thus beg the question*, I added, "For let it be once assumed that, co-ordinately with this relation, God sustains also that of a Father, and who does not see that 'creation after His image' must be held to bear on His relation to the subjects of it, as implying not only 'intelligent responsibility,' but that congeniality of disposition," &c. (*supra*, p. 31). Thus does it appear that the *petitio principii* was made, not by me, but by Dr Candlish himself.

In regard to the dilemma, between the horns of which I tried to fix him (p. 31-34 of this volume), he says, "Even if I held, which I do not, that the new birth, or new creation, did no more than restore the broken image of God in the soul to what it was before the Fall, I have never said that by itself alone it constituted sonship. Dr Crawford's dilemma, therefore, is at fault" (p. 15).

It is not necessary, however, in order to fix him on my dilemma, that he should hold the evangelical sonship to be constituted by regeneration *of itself alone*. All that is requisite is, that he should hold regeneration to be *one of the main grounds* of the evangelical sonship; just as *we* hold man's originally bearing the image of God to be one of the main grounds, though not the only one, of man's original sonship. Now Dr Candlish expressly states that "our being sons of God is connected very closely with our regeneration; and connected, too, after the very same manner that a man's being the son of his earthly parent is connected with his generation in time; or after the same manner that our Lord's being the Son of His heavenly Father is connected with His generation from eternity." And again he states that "John mainly rests our sonship on our being born of God," and that "this makes us sons by nature, and that, too, in a very literal acceptation of the term." I still maintain, therefore, that he cannot escape from my dilemma. Either he must



admit the force of the argument for man's original sonship, drawn from his creation in the image of God ; or else he must renounce his notion of a true sonship as "mainly resting" on the restoration of the same image to converted sinners.

4. My fourth argument from St Luke's genealogy of our Saviour, at the close of which Adam is styled "the son of God" in the same terms in which each of the other persons in the pedigree is styled the son of his immediate progenitor, is met by Dr Candlish with the assertion, that a like argument *would equally prove the first of a race of the inferior animals to be a son of God!* If any reply need be given to this strange assertion, it is simply this, that no creature can stand in the filial relation to God, but a rational and moral creature, formed in His likeness, and capable of knowing, loving, honouring, obeying, and communing with Him.

In connection with this argument, however, there are some other topics bearing on Adam's sonship, which it is proper here to notice.

(a.) Dr Candlish adheres to his former affirmation, that "there is not a hint of sonship in all that is said of man's sin and fall ; nay, that what is revealed of God's treatment of Adam in the Garden is palpably irreconcilable with the idea of anything like the paternal and filial relation subsisting between them."

To this I had replied, that God's treatment of Adam in Paradise must *partly* be attributed to the *magisterial* relation, which, along with the paternal, I admit to have subsisted between them ; but that much of that treatment can be regarded in no other light than as the exercise of a considerate and benignant fatherhood.

To the former part of this reply Dr Candlish has not at all adverted ; and the latter part of it he meets with the assertion, that "the one solitary feature in Adam's condition that indicates any sort of dealing with him as a moral and responsible agent, is the prohibition to eat of the forbidden tree" (p. 20). Now, even were we to admit that this was "the only feature which indicates any sort of dealing with Adam *as a responsible agent*"—in other words, the only feature indicative of God's *magisterial* dealing with him—the question remains, Were there not other features indicative of God's *fatherly* dealing with him, such as His providential care for him, His confidential communings with him, His intimate fellowship with him, and the dominion over the inferior creatures with which He was pleased to endow him ? And it is for Dr Candlish not to assert merely, but to prove, that *these* are not to be viewed as indications of fatherhood.

I am quite aware that these traces of the paternal relation, as sustained by God towards our first parents, are viewed by Dr Candlish in no other light than as manifestations of loving and gracious sovereignty ; and that man's original standing *as a mere subject* is regarded by him as fraught with "all conceivable kinds of mutual confidence, sympathy, and esteem,"—as marked by "intercourse on terms all but equal," and as "admitting of fellowship of the closest and most intimate kind, having much in common with what is filial, tending towards the filial, and culminating naturally in the filial" (p. 9 and 79). I venture, however, with all submission, to affirm that this view of the matter is altogether indefensible. It utterly confounds the magisterial with the paternal relation, and leaves us no means of distinguishing between the two. We can form no conception of either of these relations, apart from those reciprocal dealings between the parties to it by which, in all known instances of its subsistence, it is characterised. And if those very familiarities and endearments, which mark the connection of parent and child with one another, may be set down as mere tokens of kind sovereignty and affectionate subjectship, I know not by what or what manner of indications the subsistence of the parental and filial relation can in any case be ascertained.

(b.) Dr Candlish had affirmed in his Cunningham Lectures that, "in the sentence pronounced upon Adam, there is no trace whatever of his being subjected to fatherly discipline and correction. All about it is strictly, I should say exclusively, forensic and judicial. It is the legal condemnation of a servant ; not the fatherly chastisement of a son" (3d edition, p. 173).

It is perfectly clear that Dr Candlish is here speaking,—not of *the penalty threatened* against disobedience at the time when the prohibition to eat of the tree of knowledge was imposed, nor yet of the realisation of this penalty by our first parents, as implied in that sense of guilt which drove them away from God, but of the "*sentence*" *actually uttered* or "*pronounced*" upon them, when summoned before the Divine presence to receive their doom.

Now, in venturing to dispute the assertion that "this sentence was strictly and exclusively judicial," &c., I had appealed to Dr Candlish's 'Exposition of Genesis,' in which he speaks of it as "*a remedial and not a retributive sentence*," "setting them free from the deceitful bondage of Satan, the fear of instant retribution, and the shame of guilt, and restoring truth, and hope, and confidence." And how does Dr Candlish attempt to parry this appeal? He says,

“Who ever heard of the oracle in the third chapter of Genesis being ‘the sentence denounced on the first fallen pair’? I have never said it was, though it is insinuated that I have; and the insinuation is fitted, and can scarcely fail, to impose on the unwary reader. Does Dr Crawford identify the two? If so, I think it strange Divinity for a Professor to teach” (p. 22).

There is a mistake here into which he may have been led by my inadvertent use in one instance of the word “*denounced*,” instead of his own expression “*pronounced*,” which, however, I had twice employed in the preceding pages when quoting from him. This inaccuracy on my part may have led him to express himself as if the matter in dispute between us had reference to *the penalty threatened, before the Fall, in the event of disobedience*, and not to *the sentence actually pronounced on Adam and Eve when, after their disobedience, they were called before the Lord*. And yet, it is plain enough, if my words be read carefully, that the *latter* must have been the sentence I referred to when I spoke of it as “denounced upon the *fallen pair*.” Be this as it may, however, it is not *my* statement, but *his own* statement, which it behoves him to reconcile with what he has said, and still adheres to, in his ‘Exposition of Genesis.’ He has *there* said, “The sentence which God goes on to pronounce, when He has called them before Him, is not such as they might have expected. It is not retributive, but remedial,” &c. Whereas, in his Cunningham Lectures, he affirms, “Not a hint is given of Adam having violated, when he transgressed, any filial obligation; nor, in the sentence pronounced upon him, is there any trace whatever of his being subjected to fatherly discipline and correction. All about it is strictly, I should say exclusively, forensic and judicial. It is the legal condemnation of a servant, not the fatherly chastisement of a son. No doubt the hope of recovery is held out,” &c. It is palpably evident, from the allusions here made to Adam as having “transgressed,” and to “the hope of recovery as held out,” that the sentence thus spoken of is “the oracle in the third chapter of Genesis.” And it still remains for him to reconcile what he here says of it with the very different view which he takes of it in his ‘Exposition.’ In his reply to me, indeed, he says (p. 33), “In this last sentence there is love, fatherly love, according to the sense I have explained; scarcely, however, in the sentence which it implies as having preceded it.” But I venture to remind him, that it is in “this last sentence,” “the sentence pronounced on Adam,” and not in any other sentence merely “*implied* as having preceded it,” that



he has denied in his Lectures the existence of "any trace whatever of fatherly discipline," not to say of "love," or of anything but what is "strictly and exclusively judicial." I should like to know, moreover, what trace we have in the narrative of any "*sentence pronounced upon Adam*," as having "*preceded*" this "oracle in the third chapter of Genesis"?

(c.) Dr Candlish, while admitting that "the hope of recovery was held out" to our first parents after their fall, had endeavoured to counteract the force of this circumstance by observing, that "this hope was held out in a way strictly and exclusively indicative of legal judgment and legal deliverance;" and that, "accordingly, the remedial work of Christ," by which the hope of recovery has been fulfilled, "is always represented in Scripture as purely and wholly legal, forensic, and judicial."

To this I had replied, that, admitting the legal and forensic character of "the *method* of recovery," the material question is, "*How came it to pass that any method of recovery whatsoever was provided and announced to the transgressors, at the very time when they received their sentence?* Surely *this* was a fatherly, and not at all a judicial procedure," &c. (p. 37, 38, *supra*). I added, "Be it remembered as bearing on this point, that the remedial work of Christ is *not the procuring cause* of God's love to His fallen children, but, on the contrary, *its result and manifestation*;" and then I proceeded to observe, that "to represent the matter otherwise is a gross perversion of the atonement."

Hereupon I am assailed by Dr Candlish in the following manner: "He does not, in express terms, impute to me the odious misrepresentation of the doctrine of the Cross which he justly and strongly condemns; he could scarcely venture to do so with my book, even half read, in his hands. But he does so by implication, leading, or rather forcing, his students to class me with Socinians and others, of whose views he speaks. I might resent this with some indignation, did I not ascribe it to mere confusion of ideas, and sheer inability to apprehend the distinction between what a transaction is, in its own proper nature, and what are the motives which cause, and the consequences which flow from it" (p. 23).

I am surprised that Dr Candlish should for a moment have imagined that I meant to impute to him, either expressly or by implication, that odious perversion of the atonement to which in the course of my argument I had occasion to refer. All that I did was to remind him of that very distinction which he considers me

*incapable of apprehending!* and to show him that it mattered little or nothing to the question at issue that “the *method* of our recovery” should be, in its own nature, ever so strictly and exclusively judicial, so long as *the providing of any method of recovery* for us must be viewed as the result and manifestation of Divine love, and must on this account be held to be indicative not less of the parental than of the judicial character of that adorable Being with whom it originated. It was no imputation of *doctrinal error* which I brought against him, but simply a charge of *inaccurate and inconclusive reasoning*. And this charge I was warranted to urge with all the greater confidence, from the full conviction I had that he concurred with me in tracing the atonement to its true origin in the unfathomable love of God to perishing sinners.

I confess, however, that there is one passage in his Reply, which I find some difficulty in reconciling with this conviction. He observes (p. 19, 20), “It is most important to distinguish the atonement, considered in itself, from the motive in the divine mind originating it, and from the mode of divine action for which it opens up the way. That it springs from divine love—fatherly love, if you will,—the love of the Eternal Father to His only-begotten Son,—love longing to have a household of sons in Him, and to see Him ‘the first-begotten among many brethren,’—that it issues in the actual accomplishment of the purpose on which His fatherly heart is set;—both of these things may be allowed or asserted, in perfect harmony with the most strictly legal and judicial aspect of the dread transaction on Calvary. And still the question will remain, how far fatherhood, as a real personal relation between God and any of the human family, either did or could exist prior to that transaction, and independently of it.”

The atonement is here said to “spring from divine love,”—but from “divine love” to whom? From love to “the world?”—From love to “sinners?”—From love to *those who are eventually to be saved by the atonement?* No; but exclusively—so far as this statement goes—from “the love of the *Eternal Father* to His ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON,—love longing to have a household of sons in Him, and to see Him ‘the first-begotten among many brethren.’” What, then, are we to make of those texts which expressly teach us that “God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only-begotten Son,”—that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,”—that “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten

Son into the world, that we might live through Him,"—and that "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He *loved us*, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ;" \*—what, I ask, are we to make of these and similar texts, which are among the plainest and most unequivocal, as well as most precious, to be met with in all the Bible, if, in the face of them, we are to be told that "the atonement springs from the love of the Eternal Father to His *only-begotten Son*, and His longing to see Him 'the first-begotten among many brethren,'" while not the slightest reference is made to any divine love of which "*we*," or "*sinner*," or "*the world*," were the objects, as having had any concern in originating this most wonderful provision of redeeming grace? As for "the love of the Eternal Father to His only-begotten Son," it seems to me to be held forth in Scripture, not as "the motive in the divine mind which originated the atonement," but as the consideration which renders the divine love to *sinner*s, in which the atonement originated, so astonishing. "The love of the Father to His only-begotten Son," would *per se*, if we may venture so to speak, have induced Him rather to *withhold* than to provide the atonement. And it is in *this* that His love to sinners is most remarkable, in that "*He spared not even His own Son, NOTWITHSTANDING the fatherly love which He had towards Him*," "but delivered Him up for us all." †

I am far from supposing that Dr Candlish would deliberately set aside the plain import of the texts above referred to. But I cannot help thinking that, in his eagerness to escape from a difficulty in which his peculiar theory respecting the divine fatherhood would otherwise have been involved, he has, for the time, ignored or overlooked them, or at least advanced a statement which is in no way to be reconciled with them. And in doing so he has exposed himself to the very charge of misconceiving the origin of the atonement, which with so much indignation he repels, when erroneously supposing that I had brought it against him! For what does his statement, above quoted, fairly amount to? Evidently to *this*, that the love of God the Father, in which the atonement originated, was love, *not to sinners*, but "to His only-begotten Son;" and that any love with which sinners are eventually regarded by Him, is the consequence or issue of the atonement, and not its source.

5. My *fifth* scriptural argument, founded on Paul's statement in his speech at Athens, that "we are the offspring of God," Dr Candlish now endeavours to repel on a somewhat different ground

\* John iii. 16 ; Rom. v. 8 ; 1 John iv. 9, 10.

† Rom. viii. 32.



from that which he had formerly taken. He observes of this saying, which is quoted from the writings of a heathen poet, that "Paul does not quote it as inspired: nor does his quoting it make it inspired." "Here we have not a text of Scripture at all, unless Paul's citation of it is believed to canonise it; we have simply an uninspired verse of poetry, of which that consummate master of oratory avails himself on a special occasion, and for a special purpose" (p. 16).

Now, it is very true that this saying was not inspired, as originally written by the poet from whose writings it is quoted. And, strictly speaking, it may also be said that "Paul's quoting it does not make it inspired." At the same time it is undeniable that the apostle, by not only quoting this saying, but approving of it, as he evidently does, and arguing from it, must be held as giving to it the sanction of his authority, so as to make it tantamount to one of his own sayings. Thus much is implied in the admission of Dr Candlish himself, to which I find him still adhering in his third edition (p. 166), that "Though this pregnant saying was originally a merely human and heathen utterance, *Paul, by quoting it, of course adopts and engrosses it as his own.*"

But then, adds Dr Candlish, "Paul's authority cannot be pleaded beyond the precise design for which he quoted this saying, or the use to which he turned it;" "neither his comment, nor the verse itself can be legitimately brought forward as of divine authority, beyond the special occasion and the special purpose" (p. 16). I am not sure that I fully perceive the drift of these statements. If their meaning be, that we cannot plead Paul's authority for the soundness of any inferences *we* may draw, *by the exercise of our own judgment*, from the quotation he has here made, I can have no hesitation in assenting to them. But if their meaning be that *our sonship as the offspring of God* is one of those inferences for which Paul's authority cannot be pleaded, I utterly dissent from any such affirmation. For our sonship as the offspring of God is not a mere *inference* from the saying which Paul here "adopts and engrosses as his own," but *the plain and unequivocal substance of the statement itself*. It is in fact the *premises* from which he draws his inference, and the circumstance that Paul has himself deduced from it the only conclusion which his purpose required, is a clear proof that he regarded it, not as a mere rhetorical figure, but as the announcement of a real relation between God and man, from which we in like manner are warranted to draw such inferences, suited to our exigencies, as may

be reasonable and legitimate,—with this proviso doubtless, that for the soundness of such further inferences we ourselves, and not the apostle, must be answerable.

6. In regard to my *sixth* argument, drawn from the parable of the Prodigal Son, Dr Candlish is content to leave the decision, as between us, to any one carefully reading over again his remarks in the light of my criticism. And I am equally willing to abide by such a decision.

7. To these scriptural arguments I have now added a *seventh*, drawn from “the first and great commandment” (p. 47-50, *supra*), which seems to me to be altogether conclusive.

## LECTURE VI. AND FIRST PART OF LECTURE VII.\*

Passing over some intermediate portions of my volume—for his highly favourable appreciation of which I have to offer to Dr Candlish my thankful acknowledgments—I must now briefly notice certain exceptions which he has taken to my criticism of his *second leading position*: namely, that the special sonship of believers is substantially identical with that of the only-begotten Son of God. In so doing, I shall confine myself to two or three particular topics, being content that the general merits of the question should be judged of by what I have stated in the foregoing Lectures, viewed in connection with the strictures which have been made upon them.

1. I had stated that, “if anything can be deemed essential about a relation, it must surely be the ground on which it is constituted;” and had thence inferred that “the human nature of Christ cannot be considered as sharing in His original relation to the Father as the Only-begotten, while confessedly it does not share in the *μονογενεσία* on which that relation is founded;” and, further, that the sonship conferred upon believers, being “formed or constituted by an act or work of grace,” cannot be substantially the same with that of the Only-begotten, which is “founded on a necessity of nature.”

In regard to the statement from which I drew these inferences, Dr Candlish observes: “That may be true, when it is the original constitution of the relation that is the point in question; and there-

\* Corresponding, in this edition, to Lecture VII. and Lecture VIII.

fore I agree with Dr Crawford that in the Semiarian controversy the difference was essential between the Son's being eternally begotten of the Father by *a necessity of nature*, and His being so by *the Father's will*. But it is otherwise when the question relates to the admission of others into participation in the relation, especially when that is made to depend on their real and vital personal oneness with Him in whom it is originally constituted." "I still think, in spite of Dr Crawford, that as regards the filial relation among mankind, it is essentially—that is, really and truly—the same in the case of one who is a son by natural descent, as in that of a son by marriage or by adoption" (p. 32).

The distinction he here makes is certainly ingenious ; but I hardly think that it will avail him much. (1.) I may take exception, in the first place, to the terms in which he speaks of the union of believers with the Only-begotten. Close as that union may be, we are not warranted to style it a "real *personal* oneness" with Him. (2.) Secondly, I hold that, if there be any difference between the two cases—of "the original constitution of the relation" on the one hand, and the "admission of others to participate in it" on the other hand—the difference is altogether in favour of my position. For the sonship of believers differs from that of the Only-begotten, not only as being constituted by "an act or work of grace," instead of by "a necessity of nature," but in this further respect, that it is a *secondary* or *derived* sonship, instead of being a sonship which is *original* and *essential*. (3.) Thirdly, I must still adhere to my position, that "among mankind the filial relation is not the same in the case of one who is a son by natural descent, as in that of a son by marriage or by adoption." I assigned a variety of reasons for this affirmation (see p. 163, 164, of this volume), not one of which has Dr Candlish attempted to answer. And I may now further appeal, in confirmation of it, to one of his most esteemed authorities—Thomas Goodwin—who, speaking of the very subject under discussion, thus expresses himself: "After all this, by way of difference from these, the apostle (Rom. viii. 32) entitles Christ *God's own Son*. This is, therefore, an *eminent* distinction of two sorts of sons which God had—His own proper, genuine, true Son, and others that were not His own, but either by marriage or adoption ; as strangers and aliens, in their original descent, used to be to a father that afterwards takes them for his adopted sons." "God in this speaks as plainly to men in their own language as it is possible to express it. Come to a man that hath sons by marriage, and also a son out of his own loins, and



you hear him call them all sons. But particularly ask him, ‘What son is this?’ ‘My own son,’ he says. ‘And are these so?’ ‘No; they are my daughters’ husbands, and so my sons-in-law, or my wife’s sons, or those whom I have taken to be my sons by will.’ Well, and what doth a man mean when he says, ‘This is my own son,’ especially when with a distinction from others that are adopted? All men understand a son that is of his substance, naturally begotten of him, of his flesh and blood. Then, in its infinite proportion, it ought to be so understood here.” \*

2. I had noticed a remarkable change in the mode of expression adopted by Dr Candlish, when he speaks of the relation of a *subject*, which the Eternal Word of God assumed on becoming incarnate. For whereas he had previously said, with reference to the sonship, that “Christ is the Son of God in respect of his human nature, as well as of His divine nature,” he afterwards says, regarding the subjectship, “In virtue of the one nature, He is the Son; in virtue of the other nature, He is a subject; and being one person, combining in Himself both natures, He is at once both Son and subject.”

Dr Candlish vindicates himself from any implied charge of inconsistency in regard to this matter, by insisting on the significance of the distinction between the two phrases, “in respect of,” and “in virtue of;” the former, as applied by him, signifying merely that, “as the man Christ Jesus, our Saviour is the Son of God,” while the latter, if similarly applied, would mean (what he does not hold) that “the manhood of Christ was *the ground* of His sonship.” Now, there is, doubtless, a distinction between the two phrases; and had the *latter* been used regarding Christ’s sonship instead of the *former* (understanding by Christ’s sonship His relation to the Father from eternity), the statement would then have been, not only in marked contrast with that which is afterwards used regarding Christ’s subjectship, but even in itself considered unreasonable and contradictory. But still, making all due allowance for the distinction referred to, there is a diversity in the modes of expression adopted when speaking severally of the relations of sonship and of subjectship, sufficient to bear out my argument when adverting to it.† And I venture to add, that even the phrase “in respect of,” cannot be with propriety employed in the way he somewhat hesitatingly vindicates when saying, “I do not know why we might not say, if it

\* See *infra*, Note O, where the whole passage is quoted.

† See p. 172, 173, *supra*.

were needful for my argument, that Christ is the subject of the Father *in respect of* His divine nature, though not in virtue of it" (p. 40). At least, such a statement would fall to be considered as an unauthorised imitation of that exceedingly rare scriptural expression known among divines as the *communicatio proprietatum*—the adoption of which by any theological writer Dr Cunningham has so justly censured in the following words:—"We ought to make no such attributions of what is proper to one nature to the person denominated by the other, except only when the Scripture has gone before us and sanctioned it. Some persons, on the ground that instances of this usage of language occur in Scripture, have thought themselves warranted to indulge in minute and elaborate attributions of what was proper to the one nature to the person denominated by the other, . . . declaring of Christ's human nature, or at least of *Christ as man*" (equivalent to "of Christ *in respect of His manhood*"), "what was true only of His divine nature, or of *Christ as God*, and *vice versa*—a practice which I cannot but regard as inconsistent with the awe and reverence with which 'the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,' ought ever to be contemplated."\*

3. Dr Candlish represents me (p. 40) as "disposed to contend, though somewhat doubtfully, for a double sonship in Christ." "I say somewhat doubtfully," he adds, "for at the close of his Lecture he half reserves his right to fall back upon the alternative of Christ being Son as God, and Subject as man."

I cannot account for his having so far misconceived my statements as to think that there was any "doubtfulness" betrayed by them. After having expressed, at the close of my Lecture, a full conviction that his argument, in opposition to the "double sonship of Christ," was utterly fallacious, I went on to show that, even were it ever so sound, it could not be considered as lending any support to his main position. And in order to show this, I said, "*Be it admitted, for the sake of argument*, that Christ did not sustain any filial relation to the Father proper to His human nature, we are not thence, surely, to rush to the conclusion," &c. It is surely unfair, then, in Dr Candlish to represent me as half inclined to fall from my position, when he might, I think, have seen that I was merely *supposing*, "for the sake of argument," that the position *were* renounced, in order to prove that the surrender of it would avail him nothing.

So far from being doubtful in regard to Christ's double sonship, I

\* Cunningham's 'Historic Theology,' vol. i. p. 318.

am, on the contrary, most earnest in contending for it. I hold it to be inseparable from the doctrine, which in my first two Lectures I have endeavoured to establish, of man's original sonship on the footing of creation. For if it be one of the properties or relations of man, as an intelligent and moral creature, *to be a son of God*, then must this human property or relation, as well as all others which do not involve anything sinful, be attributed, in respect of His human nature, to our Immanuel.

It is true, the human nature of our Lord cannot *of itself* be said to sustain any relation ; but it may, notwithstanding, be the ground of human relations sustained by that Divine Person, who assumed it, in His incarnate state. Thus much is implied in the following statements of Dr Candlish (p. 41, note) : “ Surely relations are of a person, though *they may be founded on, or held in virtue of, the properties of the nature of the person.* Hence, though the grounds of Christ's relations to God lie in one or other of His natures, yet the relations themselves are personal.” The same principle is implied in what he states respecting the human relation of “subjectship,” which the Son of God is held by him to have sustained by virtue of His assumption of the human nature,—albeit His human nature had no distinct personal subsistence. For if man's relation of “subjectship” be attributable to Him, by reason of His assumed humanity, so also must man's relation of sonship,—if it be the case, as I have argued in my opening Lectures, that man, as an intelligent and moral creature, is a son of God.

No wonder, then, that Dr Candlish should say (p. 41), “ I partly allow the force of this argument.” I presume that his qualifying phrase “partly” has reference to his denial of the sonship of man as an original or creatural relationship. But if so, the qualification detracts little from the amount of his admission ; for I hold, on the strength of his statements already referred to (*supra*, p. 293, 294), that he has *virtually conceded man's original sonship* to as great an extent as I feel concerned to plead for it. For when I find him saying of man's creature-relationship to God, that “ *it admits of intercourse on terms all but equal,*”—that “ *all conceivable kinds of mutual confidence, sympathy, and esteem may be infused into it,*”—that “ *from the first it admits of fellowship of the closest and most intimate sort, having much in common with what is filial,*”—that “ *it tends towards the filial, and culminates naturally in the filial,*”—nay, that “ *it at once places the intelligent creature, simply as such, on a footing of far truer and nobler affinity to his Maker than Dr Crawford's descrip-*



*tion of original sonship, even if stretched to the utmost, will allow,"*—I really have no heart to fight with him about the word "sonship," when he so liberally grants, as predicable of man's original condition, all, and even *more than all*, that in using the word I intend to denote.

I observe, however, that he insists as much as ever on the difficulties involved in "the idea of a double sonship in Christ." "It presents to my mind," he says, "very much the same appearance as if we contended that one individual man sustained two relations, as a husband to his wife, or as a servant to his master, the one proper to his bodily and the other to his spiritual nature. Of course, as he consists of body and soul united, the conjugal or servile relation must manifest itself differently according as it is body or soul that is, as it were, in action or in exercise. But the relation is one because the person is one. Otherwise there surely is something like a divided husbandship or servanthship,—something therefore like a division of the one personality" (p. 42).

To this I reply, that my position does not involve anything like the assertion of "a divided sonship," in the one person of Christ. What we ascribe to Him is *two distinct relations* to God,—the one founded on His divine nature, and the other founded on His human nature. And though we apply to both of these relations the same human analogy of sonship,—because we can find no better analogy to represent them,—we are not to be held, on that account, as affirming that they are *identical*. On the contrary, we believe them to be in many respects greatly dissimilar. The cases which Dr Candlish has adduced of "husbandship and servanthship" *subsisting between human beings*, are not, by any means, fair parallels to the case in question. For these expressions, "husbandship" and "servanthship," are *literally* significant of those earthly relationships to which they are applied; whereas it is only *in the way of analogy* that the term "*sonship*" is applied, either to the relation which has always subsisted between the first and second Persons in the Godhead, or to that other relation which we also believe to subsist between God and His intelligent and moral creatures; and in which the Eternal Word participated when He assumed humanity.

In speaking thus, I trust that I shall not be misunderstood, as if I denied the *real subsistence* of either of these relations. It is not the *reality* of the relations that I call in question, but only the *strictly literal applicability* to them of the term "sonship," by which, for want of a better, they are commonly denoted. I believe

that between two of the Persons in the Godhead there has from eternity subsisted a real relationship, of which the paternal and filial relation among mankind affords, though inadequately, our most appropriate human analogy. I farther believe that between God and His rational creatures, who are formed after His image, dependent on His care, and partakers of His unceasing and exuberant bounty, there subsists a peculiarly interesting and endearing relation, for which also the fittest designation we are able to find is taken from the earthly tie of "fatherhood" and "sonship." In both cases the phraseology employed is analogical. But not the less on that account is it expressive of *realities*; and of these realities it is the fittest and best expression which the resources of human language are able to supply.

Now, the plausibility of Dr Candlish's reasoning wholly arises from his overlooking the circumstance, that the word "sonship," as applied to both of these relationships, is to be understood, not literally, but analogically; and hence that the two relations are not in themselves identical, although, from the poverty of language, we denote them by the same term. Indeed, there is no end to the difficulties and incongruities in which we should involve ourselves, did we insist on giving a strict and literal sense to analogical expressions. Thus it is said of God's people (Isa. liv. 5), "Thy Maker is thine husband." But how can He be their "*husband*," it might be asked, when He is at the same time their *Father*? So also Christ is styled the Husband of His Church, and believers are represented as "espoused to Him" (2 Cor. xi. 2). But how can this be, when Christ is their Elder Brother? In like manner, it would doubtless be a strange anomaly, that the one Person of Christ should sustain two filial relations towards the one Person of His heavenly Father, if these two filial relations were exactly the same. But the anomaly is at once removed when we consider that the two relations, though alike denominated "filial" in the way of analogy, are by no means identical, but in many respects greatly dissimilar—the one being the monogenetic sonship, which from eternity He sustained as a person in the Godhead, and the other being the human sonship, which He sustains as "the second Adam," who behoved to be "made in all things like unto His brethren." It is not, then, as I have repeatedly observed, a "divided sonship" which we ascribe to Him, but two distinct sonships, differing very materially, although, from the poverty of language, we are obliged to call them by the same name,—two distinct sonships, without sustaining both

of which the wonderful and mysterious constitution of His person, as at once very God and very man, would have been incomplete.

I may just add, that no one who believes in the common Fatherhood of God, and also in the doctrine of Evangelical Adoption, can reasonably object to the double sonship of Christ. For a like double sonship must necessarily be recognised by him as subsisting in the case of all true Christians, who are at once sons of God by creation, and "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

4. Dr Candlish expresses surprise at my "somewhat unexpected reply" in the affirmative to his question, "Whether it be possible for men to enter somehow and to some extent into the Redeemer's relation to God as His Son, as He enters into their relation to God as His subjects and servants?" "Perhaps," he adds, "Dr Crawford infers some mighty concession on my part from the qualifying words, '*somehow and to some extent.*' Of course, I was putting the argument at its lowest value; for if '*anyhow and to any extent*' we enter into His relation as He enters into ours, my case is proved" (p. 45, 46).

I venture to say that he is somewhat too hasty in coming to the conclusion that on such a condition "his case is proved." We may be truly said to "*enter somehow and to some extent*" into the Redeemer's filial relation to God, when, by virtue of His mediatorial work, and through our reception of Him and union to Him by faith, we become *children of God by the evangelical adoption*; and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And yet it would be unwarrantable to maintain that our sonship by adoption—because thus springing from our union with Him who is the only-begotten Son of God, and securing, as the result of such union, our participation in exalted honours and inestimable blessings—is "substantially identical" with the relationship which subsists between Him and the Everlasting Father in the Godhead. There can be no doubt that many orthodox theologians represent true Christians as "*somehow and to some extent*" entering into the sonship of their Lord and Saviour. In so doing, they have reference for the most part to the act of adoption, by which believers are graciously assumed as Christ's brethren into the heavenly family; though sometimes they allude to the analogy of a nuptial union, and speak of Christ's people as, by virtue of their espousal to Him, obtaining a filial place and standing in His Father's house. It would, however, be a grievous error to suppose that these esteemed authors, when so expressing themselves, had any design to represent the son-



ship of believers as “substantially identical” with that of the Only-begotten ; for, as I have shown regarding some of them, they have most carefully and emphatically distinguished between the two (Note O, *postea*).

I am confident, indeed, that almost all the authorities to whom Dr Candlish has appealed against “the alleged novelty of his views,” really go no farther than myself in the way of affirming that believers “enter somehow and to some extent into the Redeemer’s filial relation to God ;”—in other words, that they merely hold, as I do, that “believers sustain a relation to God in some respects analogous to it, or practically derive, in consequence of their fellowship with Christ, certain privileges and benefits which would not have accrued to them if Christ had not stood in this relation to the Eternal Father.” Dr Candlish maintains (p. 46) that this is tantamount to saying “that believers enter ‘somehow and to some extent’ into Christ’s sonship, *by not entering into it at all*, but only into a relation distinct from it, though in some respects analogous to it, or by getting some good from His being the Son which they could not have got otherwise.” Be it so—but what then is he to make of his own authorities ?

Take, for example, Treffrey, to whom he appeals in p. 94, 95, as thus speaking :—“Nor is He, as the Son of God, the renewer merely of the miserable state of man, but equally the type and model of the new creation. Such He is, both with respect to personal purity, and in His eternal filial relation. It is not without reference to this that the faithful are called *sons of God* ; for the entire administration of the Gospel is designed to establish, between the human spirit and God, a moral relation *in some respects analogous* (!) to that which subsists between the divine Father and the divine Son. This was one of the objects contemplated in the incarnation of the Son ; that thus He who was inconceivably remote from us might be brought near to us, and that beholding the glory even of the Only-begotten of the Father, the process of assimilation proposed in the divine counsels might be accomplished in us. Hence (Gal. iv. 4-6), ‘When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son,’ &c. He who by nature is the Son of God, becomes the Son of man, that we who by nature are sons of men may become sons of God. He assumes our nature, that we may be transformed into the likeness of His. The Son is sent forth as our Redeemer, that we may receive at once the filial relation and the filial spirit.” There is nothing here which does not fully accord with my position.

In fact, Treffrey expressly states, as I had done, that the sonship of the faithful is “in some respects analogous” to that of the Only-begotten—a statement which Dr Candlish deems equivalent to affirming “that they do not enter into Christ’s sonship at all”!

As another example, take Goodwin, to whom, notwithstanding my counter-citation, Dr Candlish still appeals (p. 92), as “using language so strong, that he would hold any controversy with him on the subject to be little better than logomachy.” This “strong language” is as follows: “Adam was the son of God by creation (Luke iii. 38), but to be a son of God by Christ, this is a higher thing, and puts the spiritualness upon it which a holy heart values. For it is to be a son-in-law by marriage unto, and union with, the natural Son of God. So, then, the spirituality of our sonship lies in that relation it hath to Christ.” Here, again, there is nothing to which I cannot fully subscribe; for while holding with Goodwin, in opposition to Dr Candlish, that “*Adam was the son of God by creation*,” I hold no less decidedly with both of them, that the evangelical adoption implies much more than a mere restoration of the lost privileges of Adam’s sonship; that it brings us into a relation to the Eternal Father somewhat analogous to that of His only-begotten Son; and that it does so in virtue of our union with Him, or, if you will, our *espousal* to Him by faith. At the same time I maintain with Goodwin, as elsewhere quoted (Note O, *postea*), that the relationship of those whom he styles “God’s sons-in-law by marriage,” though analogous to that of His only-begotten Son, is not by any means “substantially identical” with it.\*

As for the appeals made to Calvin (p. 97) and to Owen (Preface, p. xvii.), they are, to my mind, so palpably inconclusive, that I deem it altogether unnecessary to advert to them.

To show how groundless is the confidence of Dr Candlish, when he closes the preface to his third edition with the statement, “*I claim Owen as on my side*,” I may simply quote the following sentences from Owen’s Exposition of Heb. i. 6:—

“It is acknowledged that God hath other sons besides Jesus Christ,—and that with respect unto Him; for in Him we are adopted,—the only way whereby any one may attain unto the

\* There is another passage, which Dr Candlish has overlooked, in the works of Goodwin (Nichol’s edition, vol. i. p. 95-98), in which the views above indicated are much more strongly stated and much more fully illustrated; and yet it assuredly gives no real countenance to the alleged identity of the believer’s sonship with that of the only-begotten Son of God.

privilege of sonship. But *that we are sons of God with or in the same kind of sonship with Jesus Christ*, IS FALSE. Because. (1) Christ in His Sonship is *μονογενής*, the ‘only-begotten’ Son of God; and therefore it is impossible that God should have any more sons in the same kind with Him; for if He had, certainly the Lord Christ could not be His ‘only-begotten Son.’ (2.) The only filiation, the only kind of sonship, which believers share in is that of *adoption*; in any other kind of sonship they are not partakers. Now, if Christ be the Son of God in this kind, He must, antecedently to His adoption, be a member of another family—that is, of the family of Satan and the world, as we are by nature—and from thence be transplanted into the family of God, which is blasphemy to imagine. So that neither can believers be the sons of God with that kind of sonship which is proper to Christ, He being the Only-begotten of the Father; nor can the Lord Christ be the Son of God with the same kind of sonship as believers are, which is only by adoption, and their translation out of one family into another. Either to exalt believers into the same kind of sonship with Christ, or to depress him into the same rank with them, is wholly inconsistent with the analogy of faith and principles of the Gospel.”—Owen’s Works, Goold’s edition, vol. xx. p. 157, 158.

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#### LECTURE VII., LATTER PART.\*

1. I had observed that, “of those other uses of the phrase (sons of God) in a vague, analogical sense, as appropriate to any relation implying benefit on the one side and dependence on the other, there is unfortunately no particular instance pointed out;” to which Dr Candlish replies (p. 51), “I have expressly pointed out three, and commented on them in a note, which, as well as that which follows, Dr Crawford would do well to read before speaking so confidently on the subject.” I have simply to remark, in reference to this point, that the three passages, as commented on in the note, belong to another head or class—as “passages in which the use of the phrase, as a ground of complaint, or expostulation, or entreaty, is a mere rhetorical mode of speech”—and that under this other head I have endeavoured fully to discuss them (p. 201, 202, *supra*).

\* Corresponding to Lecture IX. in this edition.



2. With respect to the four passages quoted (p. 203, *supra*) from Deut. viii. 5, Mal. iii. 17, Psalm ciii. 13, Prov. iii. 12, Dr Candlish says (p. 52) : "I am still of opinion that 'the very nearness of their approach to the assertion of God's fatherhood makes the stopping short of it all the more noticeable ;' for, in spite of what is said about their implying a sort of gracious fatherly dealing, they do stop short of the assertion of fatherhood." In reply, it may suffice to state that, for the reasons formerly given (p. 203, *supra*), which Dr Candlish has not attempted to meet, I am still of opinion that "there is no such stopping short." But he adds : "Nor am I moved to give up my inference, founded on Paul's manner of quoting the last of them, though I do not attach much importance to it. True, he quotes from the Septuagint, as I am kindly informed. But I am accustomed to hold that the inspired authors of the New Testament writings, in quoting Old Testament texts, whether in the language of the Hebrew original, or in the language of the Greek translation, or in language differing from both, had a special meaning of their own, or rather of the spirit inspiring them, in the words they used" (p. 52).

I am surprised that Dr Candlish does not give up this inference, and all the more so that "he does not attach much importance to it," though he still speaks of it in his Lectures as "not a little significant." For the circumstance, of which I informed him, that "Paul quotes from the Septuagint," *entirely sweeps away the ground on which the inference rests* ; namely, "that Paul does not scruple to throw this text into New Testament form, for the purpose of his inspired New Testament appeal, saying, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.'" It is idle to urge the practice of the apostles, in quoting Old Testament texts, whether from the original Hebrew or from the Septuagint, to give them "a special meaning of their own, or rather of the Spirit inspiring them." For in the present case *we have no instance of this practice*, inasmuch as Paul quotes *verbatim* from the Septuagint, and puts no other meaning on the passage quoted than that which it was understood to bear considerably more than two centuries before the birth of Christ. Be this as it may, I am not disposed "to give up my inference" from the concession of Dr Candlish, that "*fatherhood is in this text as Paul was inspired to give it ;*" that inference being that if there be an assertion of God's fatherhood in Heb. xii. 5, 6, there must be allowed to be a like assertion of God's fatherhood in those seven passages of the Old Testament, Deut. xxxii. 6 ; Isa. i.

2, and lxiii. 16 ; Jer. iii. 4, and xxxi. 20 ; Hos. i. 10 ; and Mal. i. 6, in which it is even more expressly and emphatically declared.

3. Dr Candlish says of me (p. 53) : " He does not deny the application of the texts I have quoted to the Messiah ; he simply tries to turn the edge of my reasoning by giving them a less definite meaning than I am disposed to give them, and by making much of the different grounds on which the Messiah may be called the Son of God in the 2d Psalm, as if that had any relevancy to my argument, which is simply that He is declared to be God's son *par excellence*, in a manner unique and singular."

I might safely appeal to any careful reader of my argument (p. 206, 207, *supra*) to say whether this be a fair representation of it. I must add, however, that Dr Candlish, in his eagerness to show that my answer to his reasoning is "irrelevant," has not correctly set forth the drift of his own argument. His argument was, not "simply that the Messiah is declared in the Old Testament to be God's son *par excellence*, in a manner unique and singular," but that "He is declared to be so with *a clear, exact, and unequivocal precision that stands in marked contrast with those vague and indefinite modes of speech*" to which we appeal in proof of the sonship of men.\* Now, I submit that, in reply to such an argument, it was in the highest degree "relevant" to show that the texts quoted by him as declaring the Messiah's "unique" sonship were not by any means so pre-eminently definite and unequivocal in their import as he alleged.

4. In the following sentence a serious charge is brought against me : "The absence,—I do not say of the filial spirit, though Dr Crawford would fain put that unfair and invidious gloss upon my argument,—but the absence of the recognition of the filial relation, in the spiritual and devotional exercises of the Old Testament, is still to me a very important and significant fact" (p. 54).

In meeting this charge, I may observe, *in the first place*, that I have nowhere, either in quoting the express words or in representing what I conceived to be the import of Dr Candlish's statements upon this subject, employed the phrase "*filial spirit*," but have uniformly and strictly adhered to the expression "*filial element*." And *secondly*, while in one passage (3d edition, p. 187) he certainly does state, nearly as above, "that in Old Testament piety there is not anything like a full recognition,—scarcely indeed any recognition at all,—of that personal relation of fatherhood and sonship which enters so

\* Candlish, 3d edition, p. 176.

largely and so deeply into the prevailing *spirit* (!) of Christian devotion," yet in two other passages he expresses himself as follows,—“I mean the very remarkable absence, in the recorded religious experience and religious utterances of the Old Testament saints, of the *filial element*” (3d edition, p. 177); and again: “The divine wisdom in this arrangement is signally manifested in the character and *spirit* (!) of Old Testament piety, as that was necessarily moulded by the sort of religious life which it occasioned. I have already noticed the fact, that there is little, or I think I may almost say nothing, of the *filial element* in the recorded spiritual experiences and spiritual exercises of Old Testament believers. The Psalms entirely want it” (3d edition, p. 186, 187). I confidently aver, therefore, with reference to this topic, that I have faithfully expressed his meaning, and have *employed his very words*; and that there is no ground for the accusation which he brings against me of “putting an unfair and invidious gloss upon his argument.”

5. Dr Candlish complains of me (p. 55) for having slighted his interpretation of Heb. xi. 40, and xii. 23, “with very little of exegetical argument, and with no suggestion of any better.” I hope he will be satisfied with the fuller consideration I have now given to these passages (*supra*, p. 208-211).

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### LECTURE VIII.\*

In regard to the subject of this Lecture Dr Candlish observes (p. 56), “I might warrantably decline all argument on this point with an antagonist who has the good taste and modesty to charge me with ‘free handling of the language of Holy Scripture,’ and such free handling as must make it ‘impossible for orthodox theologians, if they adopt it, consistently to protest against the procedure of those who strive, by the like forced and unnatural methods of interpretation, to explain away the most essential articles of revealed truth.’” He adds that I “have ventured to cast upon him so grave an imputation without a shadow of proof.” And afterwards he speaks of it as a “reckless imputation” (p. 61).

Now I should be very sorry to think that I am capable of “cast-

\* Corresponding to Lecture X. of this edition.



ing recklessly and without the shadow of proof a grave imputation" upon any one, above all upon such a one as the distinguished writer who brings this charge against me. Whether I can be justly said to have done so in the present instance, I leave it to my readers and his to determine. The circumstances are as follows :—

Dr Candlish had affirmed that, "as regards the nature and character of God's paternal relation to His people, there is in Scripture, especially in our Lord's teaching, *a studied avoiding of the human analogy*, indicating a desire on His part that His disciples should learn to conceive of their sonship, not analogically at all, but by direct knowledge and insight; or, in other words, that they should be led to apprehend their sonship,—not merely as a relation similar to sonship in a human family, nor even as a relation similar to His own sonship in the divine family, but as identically the same relation" (3d edition, p. 224). In meeting this assertion I had ventured to say: "I am utterly at a loss to see on what ground it can be vindicated. On the contrary, a reference to the human analogy is implied in every mention of 'His heavenly Father,' or of 'our heavenly Father,' which at any time our Lord has made. It must be so, unless we suppose Him to have used the expression in some superhuman sense, which His hearers could not possibly understand, and that, too, without being at any pains to caution them against attaching to it its ordinary and familiar meaning. Certainly, when our Lord addresses us in human language, we must interpret His words according to the plain meaning which, as used among men, they are understood to bear. And when we find Him, in His Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere, repeatedly and emphatically styling God 'our Father,' and instructing us to address Him by that title, it seems to me utterly indefensible to maintain that He is all the while 'studiously avoiding the analogy of human fatherhood,' and 'indicating a desire that we should conceive of our sonship quite otherwise than as bearing a resemblance to what we might see in any human family'" (*supra*, p. 225). Then followed my "imputation of 'free handling.'" And I confidently maintain that it cannot, under the circumstances, be characterised as "reckless" and "without a shadow of proof." When modern rationalists explain away those texts which apply sacrificial expressions to the death of Christ, and insist that "the Jewish as well as the heathen sacrifices show us rather what the sacrifice of Christ was not, than what it was," I am sure that no one would be more ready than Dr Candlish to bring against them the just charge of "free handling"

of the statements of Holy Scripture. And on what grounds? Simply because the inspired writers, in habitually applying sacrificial expressions to the death of Christ, must be held to have attached to these expressions the obvious meaning which they were understood to bear, as in ordinary use at once by themselves and by those converts from Judaism and from heathenism to whom they were writing. And so in the present instance, I am still at a loss to see in what other way we can fitly characterise the statement, that Christ—though habitually using the term “Father” with reference to God as a “familiar household word,” and instructing us to regard Him and address Him as “our Father,”—and this too without in any way apprising us that He is using the word in any unusual or superhuman sense,—is all the while “studiously avoiding the analogy of human fatherhood,” and “indicating a desire that we should conceive of our sonship quite otherwise than as bearing a resemblance to what we might see in any human family.” Dr Candlish indeed says that “in holding the human analogy to be implied in every mention of ‘our heavenly Father’ which at any time our Lord has made,” I am chargeable with “a mere *petitio principii*, pure and simple,”—“the iteration of which,” he adds, “without one syllable of proof, seems to me to aggravate the offensiveness of his reckless imputation about free handling” (p. 61). To this I need only reply that I did not deem it necessary to adduce formal proof of what appeared to be self-evident. And most of my readers, I believe, will readily concur with me in thinking that it was altogether unnecessary to prove that *Christ really meant what His words plainly express*, according to the recognised and well-known sense in which they were familiarly understood by all who heard Him.

2. In regard to his argument from Heb. ii. 11, in connection with John xx. 17, Dr Candlish simply reiterates his former statements, and says scarcely anything that is worthy of particular notice on what he calls “my elaborate attack” upon them (*supra*, p. 229-236).

“I confess my inability,” he says, “to understand Dr Crawford’s meaning, when he seems to impute to me the absurdity of holding that our Lord’s communications with His disciples on the subject of their sonship, or indeed on any subject, were very full and frequent during the mysterious forty days. My argument implies the reverse, and is strengthened the more strongly the reverse is held. Little as He said to them, He began to say it by sending them a message unprecedentedly fraternal” (p. 66).

It is, indeed, very evident that Dr Candlish has thoroughly mis-

understood me as to this matter. In his over-readiness to suspect me of bringing against him a charge of "absurdity," which my words cannot by any fair or reasonable construction be held to convey, he seems to have had no suspicion that I was really advancing against him an argument tending to the overthrow of his position, and which, broadly as it was placed before him, he has not condescended to notice. My argument was, that "the statement under review respecting *our Lord's more free, familiar, and unreserved recognition of the disciples as His brethren, after His great work of redemption had been completed*, is as nearly as possible *the opposite of the fact*. Any reserve which He previously maintained with them was not in regard to the fulness of His sympathy with them, or the closeness and kindliness of His love to them as His brethren, but rather in regard to the majesty of His divine nature, and the deep mysteries of His expiatory sufferings and death. After His resurrection, on the other hand, He seems to have been at more pains to impress them with just views of the dignity of His person, and the efficacy of His mediation, than to encourage in them anything like a renewal of the same familiarities of intercourse and fellowship to which they had been previously accustomed" (*supra*, p. 236). Such was my argument. And most plainly the allegation which it ascribed to Dr Candlish, and which it was intended to controvert, was an allegation, not of "*full and frequent communications*" on the part of our risen Lord with His disciples regarding their sonship, but of "*our Lord's more free, familiar, and unreserved recognition of them as His brethren after His resurrection*, than before His great work of redemption had been completed." There is one sentence of Dr Candlish's statement above quoted which I have read with considerable surprise. "Little as our Lord said to them," during the forty days, "He began to say it by sending them a message *unprecedentedly fraternal*." It would seem from this statement that he adheres to his former assertion that Christ had "never called them brethren before." And yet I had pointed out at least two instances, Mat. xii. 49, 50, and xxv. 40, in which He had expressly called them His brethren. And the instances are numerous, prior to His death, in which, whether or no He applied to them the *name*, He assuredly gave them the *treatment* of brethren, and maintained with them an intimacy and closeness of fraternal intercourse to which we find no parallel after His resurrection.

3. I ought, perhaps, here to notice a charge that is brought against me in a note subjoined to page 65 of Dr Candlish's reply. "I am



sorry," he says, "to be obliged to caution the readers of Dr Crawford's book against a most unwarrantable mode of stating my views on this point. By means of erroneous marks of citation and skilfully-adjusted fragments of sentences, he contrives to make my 'free handling' look very absurd and offensive." It is unnecessary, however, to dwell upon this charge, inasmuch as my accuser has himself supplied my vindication; for, strange to say, he closes the note by acknowledging that "the extracts I had given from his lecture in the immediately preceding page, if read continuously, sufficiently explain his meaning." The truth is that I have in all cases been especially careful to represent the statements of Dr Candlish *with the utmost fulness and fairness, in his own words*. But, after having done so, I have felt myself at liberty to fasten upon such particular parts of his statements as were pertinent to the argument I was prosecuting at the time, without quoting over again other parts that were irrelevant to it. And every reader, by comparing my smaller with my larger quotations, has the means of judging of the fairness of my procedure.

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#### LECTURES IX. AND X.\*

1. Dr Candlish blames me for having put an unfair construction on his statement respecting the function of *love* in the matter of our adoption. "Dr Crawford," he says, "chooses to understand this suggestion as implying that I would substitute *love* for *faith* as the means of adoption; or separate the love with which, as involved in faith, I associate adoption, from the faith with which alone justification is connected." My reply simply is, that, so far as appeared to me, I had no room for "choosing to understand" him otherwise; for his words were that, "in the matter of our adoption, it is the very circumstance of its 'working by love' that fits faith for being the appropriate organ or instrument; in fact, one might almost put it thus—love occupies somewhat of the same place with reference to adoption or sonship which faith occupies with reference to justification." I observe that he still retains these words in his third edition (p. 244). And therefore, although I have modified the terms

\* Corresponding to Lectures XI. and XII. of this edition.

in which I dissent from his doctrine upon this subject, I must still maintain that doctrine to be erroneous.

2. Dr Candlish had affirmed that those things which are ordinarily held to constitute "the privileges of the sons of God,"—and which are represented in this light in our Confession of Faith, Chapter XII.,—such as parental care and provision, fatherly chastening, free access to God, intimate communion with Him, a filial spirit, and a heavenly inheritance—"cannot in themselves be regarded as *filial* privileges,"—and that those manifestations of divine benignity which they evince "may, to a large extent, be all classed as *benignant offices of government, and of government merely*." To this I replied (1), That if these benignant offices are governmental merely, and not parental in their character, it must be impossible to draw any line of distinction between the proper actings of an affectionate parent and a beneficent ruler; (2), That we have not only the analogy of human fatherhood to warrant us in speaking of these privileges as properly *filial*, but *the clear statements of Holy Scripture that all true believers are the adopted sons of God*, and consequently that they are warranted to expect from Him such treatment as every adopting parent among men is pledged to bestow on the children of his adoption; (3), That one and all of the privileges in question are attributed to believers *under the character of filial privileges* which God, as their heavenly Father, confers upon them.

Dr Candlish only adverts to the second of these arguments, and slightly says of it, "What have we in this beyond the human analogy again after all?" (p. 71).

I submit that we *have* here "something beyond the analogy" of an adopting parent among men. We have that analogy sanctioned by express statements of Holy Writ, that God sustains the relation of an adopting parent towards believers, and has pledged Himself to deal with them agreeably to that relation. And further, in terms of my third argument,—to which Dr Candlish has not thought it proper to advert,—we have the significant fact that one and all of the privileges in question are not only attributed in Scripture to believers, but are so attributed to them *in the character of filial privileges*, which God, as their heavenly Father, bestows upon them. *This* I have shown by the most decisive scriptural references (*supra*, p. 271), and no attempt has been made to controvert me. I must, therefore, be allowed to repeat my expression of surprise that the representation which I have given of these privileges should be held to contain nothing that is clearly, specifically, and

definitely characteristic of true sonship, when we thus find that not only in its general outlines, but in its minute details, it is set forth *as filial* by the express authority of the Word of God.

I cannot leave this topic without adverting to the slighting manner in which Dr Candlish is wont to speak of the *vague analogical views* of the Divine Fatherhood, which are entertained by those who differ from him, as contrasted with "his own doctrine of a real and proper Fatherhood, more definite and illustrious, both in itself and in its fruits, than the human analogy can grasp" (p. 71).

If his doctrine of the Fatherhood of God really be so illustrious, above every other, for its definiteness and precision, it must strike most of his readers, one should think, as a remarkable thing, that he should have so scrupulously refrained throughout his whole treatise, from every approach to a definition or description of it. Their surprise will probably be heightened when they are told that in striving to form a conception of the Divine Fatherhood, there is little or nothing to be learned from that human relationship to which the word "fatherhood" is ordinarily applied. And I am inclined to think their wonder will reach its climax when, after being sent away from the families of earth as utterly incapable of supplying them with precise and satisfactory apprehensions of this relationship, they are taught to seek more definite views of it in the contemplation of those unsearchable mysteries which shroud the internal constitution of the Godhead !

3. In regard to the element of "*inviolable security*," which he holds to be the grand and distinctive property of the believer's sonship, Dr Candlish again charges me with having uncandidly misrepresented his sentiments. "He begins," says Dr Candlish, "with assuming that I hold adoption, as such, to have in it the element alleged, 'apart from the sure grounds of the covenant of grace on which it rests ;' and he makes much of an 'admission' on my part that a 'son's standing in his earthly father's house is not absolutely and inviolably secure,' since he may renounce or forfeit it. This is candid ! Would any of his readers imagine that I adverted to that fact for the very purpose of pointing out the insufficiency of the human analogy as a measure or type of the sonship of the redeemed ? It is hard sometimes to believe that Dr Crawford has read what he criticises with any care. It is not any sort of sonship that I speak of, but the sonship of those who are one with Christ ; and it is unfair to represent me as saying that 'adoption, merely as such, implies absolute security'" (p. 72).



I am quite sure that if Dr Candlish had "read with any care" my observations, he could not have brought against me such a charge. Had he done me the justice *to take the commencement of my argument in connection with the sequel of it*, he would at once have seen that I was as far as possible from misrepresenting his sentiments in the manner alleged.

I did not begin "with *assuming that he held* adoption or sonship" (that is, "any sort of sonship"), "as such, to have in it the element of inviolable security, apart from the sure grounds of the covenant of grace." What I began with was *a statement of my own*, which I laid down at the outset as the foundation of my argument, "that adoption, *as such*, cannot be considered as having in it any 'element of inviolable security,' more than justification and other evangelical blessings, apart from the sure grounds of the covenant of grace on which it rests." And so far was I from "assuming," or insinuating, that Dr Candlish held an opposite view as to this matter, that I immediately proceeded to show that he entirely coincided with me! And it was to show that he "fully admitted" the above position that I quoted his own statements respecting the standing of earthly sonship as not being absolutely and inviolably secure. Having laid down this position as one in which we both agreed, I then added that "some other consideration, not necessarily involved in the notion of sonship, must be taken into account in order to impart to it this most important element." And foremost among those "other considerations" which might be supposed to give to it this element of inviolable security, I proceeded to notice Dr Candlish's own theory of *the believer's participation in the sonship of the Only-begotten*. This theory, however, I did not deem it necessary to discuss over again in connection with the present argument. And accordingly I set it aside on the ground of "our having already seen that the monogenetic sonship is incapable of being shared in by any created being." Of course Dr Candlish does not admit that I had succeeded in disproving his theory in my preceding Lectures. But honestly believing, as *I* did, that I had done so, I was entitled to hold myself exempted, at this stage, from any renewed discussion of the subject. Be this as it may, however, it is not the *conclusiveness*, but the *fairness* and *candour* of my present argument, which is the matter in question: and I confidently appeal to the judgment of any unbiassed reader, whether the charge of unfairness and want of candour be not in every respect unwarranted and unjustifiable.

4. In alluding to the alleged difference between adoption and other evangelical benefits, especially justification, as regards the element of inviolability, Dr Candlish confines himself to the following brief statement—"I hold, as he does, that our standing in respect of our being justified is quite as infallibly secure as our standing in respect of our being adopted; and that the security of the former might be guaranteed altogether apart from the latter. Still, I hold also that our being raised to a participation with Christ in His sonship does involve in it something that there is not in our being reinstated in the position of righteous subjects through participation with Him in His righteousness; that the one benefit is not only the fitting sequel of the other, but may also be the means of making that other as inviolable as it is itself; and that all this may be in terms of the covenant of grace connecting the two inseparably together" (p. 72, 73).

In these words he has merely re-asserted his former position, without taking the slightest notice of the arguments by which I had endeavoured to controvert it. I beg the especial attention of my readers to these arguments (*supra*, p. 274, 275), for those statements of Dr Candlish, against which they are directed, appear to me to be among the most groundless and erroneous of all his speculations.

5. In connection with what Dr Candlish politely terms my "critical examination, if it is to be so called, of John viii. 35, 36," he tries to fasten upon me a charge of "free handling" of the language of Scripture. I had said, "On the other hand, if by '*the Son*' in this verse we are to understand '*the only-begotten Son of God*,'—which is the view held by Bengel, and apparently preferred by Tholuck,—then, indeed, His 'abiding in the house for ever' is absolutely certain. But this certainty arises from the incommunicable and unchangeable perfections of His divine nature, in which other persons, who become the sons of God by creation or by adoption merely, cannot participate."

After quoting the last of these sentences, Dr Candlish asks, "Is that in the verse? Nay, the Son's abiding in the house is connected simply with His sonship; there is not a word about 'the incommunicable perfections of His divine nature.' What of 'free handling' now?" (p. 73). To these questions I need only reply, that the statement objected to was not given by me as *contained in the verse*, but as *my own inference*, and, I conceive, an unavoidable inference, from the construction put upon the verse by Bengel and Tholuck. For if by "the Son" we are here to understand, not a

*son generically* (that is, *any* or *every* son), but “*the only-begotten Son of God*,” it seems to me very evident that the case is then an exceptional one, inasmuch as from the permanency of *His* position in His Father’s house no conclusion can be drawn as to the like permanency pertaining inherently to the filial standing of those who are sons of God merely by creation or by adoption. At all events, this inference can only be controverted by a *petitio principii* on the part of Dr Candlish, that his peculiar theory respecting the participation of believers in the monogenetic sonship is well founded.

6. The only other charge brought against me by Dr Candlish, to which I deem it necessary to advert, is that of ignoring the 29th verse of Rom. viii., when disputing his statement that adoption forms the main subject of the apostle’s triumphant song at the close of that chapter. “Is it not odd,” he says (p. 75), “that Dr Crawford omits all notice of this verse (29th) in the quotations he gives to prove that ‘there is no particular allusion to adoption *here*,’ while he sets out in formidable array verses 1, 2, 11, 28?”

The “oddness” of my procedure as to this matter admits of the easiest possible explanation. The fact is that *I had first of all alluded* to the 29th verse, along with others, *as unquestionably referring to the privileges of adoption!* I had said, “*There can be no doubt* that in the course of this chapter there *are* various allusions to the privileges of the children of God, to their guidance by the Spirit, to their filial disposition, to their glorious liberty, to their heavenly inheritance, *to their destined conformity to the image of the Eternal Son;*” my reference being to verses 14, 15, 17, 21, and 29. I then added, “But I see no reason why *these* should be singled out from all the other privileges mentioned in connection with them, as if they exclusively contributed to the apostle’s confidence. Why may we not suppose him to have had a reference to such other animating statements as the following” (quoting thereafter verses 1, 2, 11, 28, 30)—“statements which were just as well calculated as anything he says on the subject of adoption to draw from him that triumphant expression of confidence with which the chapter concludes?” I submit, therefore, that he charges me unjustly with “ignoring” or “omitting” all notice of verse 29. I plainly referred to that verse when enumerating those parts of the chapter which I admitted to convey “without doubt allusions to the privileges of the sons of God.” I only omitted it (where, of course, it would have been out of place) when I proceeded to contrast with these allusions to adoption certain *other statements* (of which it was not one) which



I held to be equally well fitted to suggest that "jubilant song" with which the apostle closes the chapter (*supra*, p. 280, 281).

In connection with this charge Dr Candlish complains of me as having censured him for interpolating the words "as sons," so as to read "glorified as sons," in verse 30; and he says, "I did not add it as anything more than my comment or interpretation, and as such I adhere to it."

My answer is, that I did not impute to him anything more than he himself acknowledges; for after saying of verses 30, 31, and 32, "There is no particular allusion to adoption *here*," I added, "The author, indeed, whose theory we are controverting, inserts such an allusion *in his comment* on the passage. 'The apostle,' he says, 'fixes on the side of both eternities the sacred chain that binds the earth to heaven above; *called as sinners, justified as believers, glorified as sons*—so runs the climax.'"

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I have now finished all the observations which I have deemed necessary in answer to the strictures of Dr Candlish. I regret that they should have taken, to so great an extent, the form of a *personal vindication*. But this was unavoidable. For the charges brought against me, of having recourse to "unworthy arts of controversy" (p. 4), of "not very creditable conduct" (p. 22), of "minute special pleading, not to say word-catching and fence of logic" (p. 28), of "unfair and invidious glosses" (p. 54), of "reckless and offensive imputations without one syllable of proof" (p. 61), and of "most unwarrantable misstatements" (p. 65), &c. &c., are such as I felt myself necessitated to repel. I trust that these charges have been fairly met and fully answered. And I have the greater confidence in contending against them from the very remarkable unanimity of all my critics, with the solitary exception of Dr Candlish, in holding me to be peculiarly exempted from them. I rejoice to find that, in one and all of the periodicals which have done me the honour of noticing my book, the fullest credit is given me for the fairness and candour with which my whole argument is conducted. As a single specimen of many that might be quoted, I subjoin the following extract from a magazine which cannot be supposed to have any undue bias, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise, in my favour:—"The

author reasons with the earnestness of one who is contending, not for victory, but for truth ; and though his book is throughout controversial, he never forgets the courtesy of the gentleman, or suffers himself to take the least unfair advantage of an opponent. Like Dr Hill, he is most particular in stating with accuracy the views of those with whom he is debating ; and he is never guilty of mistaking a bad name for a good argument." \*

\* 'United Presbyterian Magazine,' October 1866.

## II.

## NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE A, *page 7.*MANSEL'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN SPECULATIVE AND  
REGULATIVE KNOWLEDGE.

"The highest principles of thought and action," says Mansel, "to which we can attain, are *regulative* not *speculative*; they do not serve to satisfy the reason, but to guide the conduct; they do not tell us what things are in themselves, but how we must conduct ourselves in relation to them." "In religion, God has given us truths which are designed to be regulative, rather than speculative; intended not to satisfy our reason, but to guide our practice; not to tell us what God is in His absolute nature, but how He wills that we should think of Him in our present finite state." How far this regulative knowledge is in accordance with absolute truth, he holds to be an insoluble problem. "We may indeed believe, and ought to believe, that the knowledge which our Creator has permitted us to attain to, whether by revelation or by our natural faculties, is not given to us as an instrument of deception. But in thus believing, we desert the evidence of reason, to rest on that of faith; and of the principles on which reason itself depends, it is obviously impossible for us to have any other guarantee." "We must beware, however, of mistaking the inability to affirm for the ability to deny. We cannot say that our conception of the divine nature exactly resembles that nature in its absolute existence, for we know not what that absolute existence is. But for the same reason, we are equally unable to say that it does not resemble. We must remain content with the belief that we have that knowledge of God which is best adapted to our wants and training. How far that knowledge represents God as He is, we know not, and we have no need to know." \*

\* Mansel's 'Bampton Lectures,' 3d edition, p. 141-146.



Proceeding on these principles, Dr Mansel denies the competency of the human mind to criticise a professed revelation, to the effect of deciding for or against its claims, as containing a true or a false representation of the divine nature and attributes. And in meeting objections urged against the scriptural doctrine respecting the plans or procedure of the Almighty, he advances such statements as the following : “ The principle which governs these and similar objections is, that we have a right to assume that there is, if not a perfect identity, at least an exact resemblance between the moral nature of man and that of God ; that the laws and principles of infinite justice and mercy are but magnified images of those which are manifested on a finite scale ; that nothing can be compatible with the boundless goodness of God, which is incompatible with the little goodness of which man may be conscious in himself.” \* Again, he observes, “ We do not certainly know the exact nature and operation of the moral attributes of God ; we can but infer and conjecture them from what we know of the moral attributes of man ; and the analogy between the finite and the infinite can never be so perfect as to preclude all possibility of error in the process.” † And, in like manner, he holds it to be an unwarrantable supposition, “ that all the excellencies of which we are conscious in the creature, exist in the same manner, though in a higher degree, in the Creator ;” and “ that God’s wisdom and justice and mercy must contain nothing that is incompatible with the corresponding attributes in the human character.” ‡

Now, as to the distinction between *speculative* and *regulative* knowledge, we may readily admit that there is a reasonable ground for it. Our knowledge of many subjects is partial and limited, sufficient to guide the conduct, but not to satisfy the intellect. In the phenomena of the physical world, in the processes of our own consciousness, in the action of our bodies and souls on one another, there are facts of which we are perfectly well assured, and on the conviction of which we regulate our daily conduct, without being able on any principle to account for them. But when Dr Mansel speaks of this “ regulative knowledge ” as a kind of knowledge, the coincidence of which with the very truth is absolutely indeterminable, we must utterly dissent from any such representation. All the knowledge we acquire by the right use of our faculties, even with regard to those subjects which in some respects most thor-

\* ‘ Bampton Lectures,’ 3d edition, p. 212.

† Ibid., p. 240.

‡ Ibid., Preface to 4th edition, p. 28.

oughly exceed our comprehension, must be held to be *true and trustworthy so far as it goes*; insomuch that any further knowledge of the same subjects which may be attainable by beings endowed with higher faculties, *would not falsify*, but *simply increase*, the knowledge which we have ourselves acquired. On any other supposition, indeed, I see no way of escape from universal scepticism. For how is that abyss to be by any means avoided, if once we allow it to be an insoluble problem whether such knowledge as we are capable of arriving at by the legitimate use of the faculties which God has given us, be or be not coincident with the actual truth? Besides, it seems obvious that “regulative knowledge” would cease to exercise the very function which its name indicates, were its truth, so far as it goes, held to be a questionable matter. So long as I am satisfied of its truth, I may be willing to regulate my practice by it. But once let me be persuaded that it is impossible to say whether or not it represents things as they really are, and then it will assuredly cease to regulate me any longer.

But what shall we say of the inference proposed to be drawn—respecting our incompetency to judge of the intrinsic claims of a professed revelation—from the circumstance “that our knowledge of God is only regulative, and not speculative”? We cannot admit that this inference is a sound one. Surely our knowledge of God is unworthy to be called “regulative” if we may not be guided by it, so far as it extends, in determining one of the most important questions, as bearing on our faith and practice and destiny, which a rational and moral creature can possibly be called to decide—namely, Whether a professed system of revealed religion be consistent with the character of that adorable Being from whom it claims to have proceeded?

We are told, indeed, that God’s attributes being infinite, we cannot judge of their exact nature and operation from what we know of those finite attributes of man which are called by the same names. It is true, we cannot *adequately* conceive the attributes of God, *as regards their infinite perfection*. But still we may *rightly* conceive them, *as regards their distinctive character*. Holiness is holiness still, and benevolence is benevolence still, to whatever degree of excellence they may rise. It would be utterly unreasonable to suppose that holiness, when it is infinite, can be, or do, anything which, in a finite being, would be considered *unholy*; or that benevolence, when it is infinite, can be, or do, anything which, in a finite being, would be deemed *malevolent*! We have

absolutely no meaning to attach to such words as wisdom, justice, holiness, and benevolence, except that which we give to them when applied to our fellow-creatures. And unless, when applied to God, we intend them to be expressive of the same qualities *in kind*, though incomparably higher in degree, our use of them, with respect to God, is unwarrantable and deceptive. To say, indeed, "that God's wisdom, and justice, and mercy are not necessarily exclusive of everything that is incompatible with the corresponding attributes in man," is little short of affirming that God may possibly do such things as we cannot otherwise designate than by calling them *unwise*, *unjust*, and *unmerciful*! Nor must it be forgotten that, if our knowledge of God's wisdom, and justice, and benevolence be not such that we can judge of the claims of a professed revelation by its correspondence with these attributes, our knowledge of God's *truth* must be allowed to be in the same predicament, insomuch that we cannot build upon it any assurance that He may not have wrought miracles, and issued prophecies in support of falsehood.

Truly, then, it seems to be a most perilous and destructive method to which this ingenious writer has had recourse with the view of vindicating the mysteries of revelation from those sceptical objections with which they have been assailed. We may safely and reasonably meet such objections on the ground, so effectively taken up by Bishop Butler, that the system of revelation, like the constitution and course of nature, is a scheme imperfectly comprehended by us; and, consequently, that some things contained in it may seem to our limited minds not easily reconcilable, which, did we more thoroughly know them, might be found to be perfectly consistent with the divine perfections. But, if we attempt to foreclose the objections by maintaining that wisdom, righteousness, and mercy in God are attributes entirely different, not only in degree, but in kind, from those which, as they exist in man, are called by the same names, we are laying down a principle which, if it be subversive of scepticism, is, to say the least, equally subversive of faith, and which utterly precludes us from acquiring any knowledge of God which can be of the least practical utility and advantage to us.

We confidently maintain, however, that the human mind is not incapable of attaining, by the right exercise of its natural powers, and, above all, by the marvellous light of revelation, to a knowledge of God which, though certainly inadequate, is yet, so far as it goes,



coincident with the truth. We may quote, as to this point, the just remark of Sir William Hamilton. "Though man," he says, "be not identical with the Deity, still he is created in the image of God. And it is only through an analogy of the human with the divine nature that we are percipient and recipient of the divinity." \* If there were not somewhat in man that is akin to God, it seems impossible that we should have any knowledge of Him—much more that we should be capable, as spiritual beings, of standing in any relation to Him, or holding any fellowship with Him. But the fact of our having been created in His image, and of its being the purpose of the Gospel to renew us after the same image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, warrants us to regard whatever is excellent in the sanctified principles and dispositions of the children of God as a true, though faint and inadequate, counterpart of the divine perfections.

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NOTE B, *page* 26.

ANALOGY OF EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY FATHERHOOD.

In using the words referred to in the above page, it is possible that the author's meaning may have been, "that the fatherly relation, as it subsists on earth, is fitted, and probably intended, to suggest the idea of a similar relation between earth and heaven"—not *as actually subsisting on the footing of creation and providence*, but *as destined ultimately to subsist on the footing of adopting grace*.

If such, however, was the meaning of his statement, it is altogether at variance with the results of experience. For, on the one hand, heathen writers have often employed the earthly relation of fatherhood to illustrate the divine paternity as *a relation actually subsisting* between the Creator and His intelligent creatures. But, on the other hand, no heathen writer was ever led, by the analogy of human fatherhood, to anticipate the ultimate constitution of a like relationship between God and man, as something entirely foreign to their natural relations, and destined to be superadded to them by adopting grace.

Besides, if the relation of an earthly parent to the child whom

\* 'Discussions,' p. 19.

he has begotten and nurtured, bears any analogy to the relations between God and man, the analogy certainly is, not to that gracious relation which God sustains towards His *children by adoption*, but to that natural and original relation which He bears to those who are His children by creation, formed after His image, and sustained and nourished by His providence.

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NOTE C, *page* 50.

MR WRIGHT'S VIEWS OF THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

Soon after the publication of the second edition of the foregoing Lectures, there appeared an able and interesting treatise, entitled 'The Fatherhood of God, and its relation to the Person and Work of Christ, and to the Operations of the Holy Spirit,' by Charles H. H. Wright, M.A., British Chaplain at Dresden; on which, in so far as it controverts the doctrine of *the Common Fatherhood of God*, I deem it necessary to make a few remarks.

To a large extent, indeed, this author has adopted the same general arguments and the same scriptural expositions to which, as it seems to me, I have already given a sufficient answer, either in the course of the preceding Lectures, or in my reply to the strictures of Dr Candlish (Appendix I.) There are other grounds, however, peculiar to himself, on which he endeavours to establish his position, that God does not sustain any relation of paternity except to those who are His children by faith in Jesus Christ. And it is to these peculiar grounds that I purpose now to confine my observations.

Mr Wright endeavours to found an argument against the common fatherhood of God, on what he holds to be the true constitution of man, as affirmed by Delitzsch in his 'Biblical Psychology,' and by Mr Heard in his recent treatise on 'The Tripartite Nature of Man.'

According to these writers, Man is composed, not of two parts, Body and Soul, but of three parts, Body, Soul, and Spirit,—the Soul being the seat of our intellectual and emotional consciousness, —while the Spirit is the seat of that higher spiritual consciousness by which we know, and love, and serve God. It is in respect of

this *Spiritual part of his constitution* that man is held by them to have been created in the divine image; and it is in the same respect exclusively that he is, according to their doctrine, a *son of God*, inasmuch as God is not the Father of *souls*, but “the Father of *spirits*.” By the fall, however, man’s *spirit*, as they affirm, has been reduced to a dead or dormant state, from which it is only revived or re-awakened in the case of those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. And hence, Mr Wright argues, God is not to be considered as in any real sense the common Father of all mankind, but only as the Father of those believers in Jesus Christ, in whom the spiritual part of their nature has been restored to its proper energy and activity.

It does not appear necessary, in meeting this argument, to enter into any discussion of that theory of the “tripartite nature of man,” on which it proceeds. For even should we grant that this theory is as defensible as its able and ingenious advocates represent, we may venture to affirm that it furnishes no sufficient ground on which God’s common fatherhood can be controverted.

1. It seems very clear, at least, that *Adam’s* filial relation to God must, on the principles of this theory, be recognised. For, as Mr Wright fully admits, “Adam was created perfect. His body was a well-arranged organism. It was in subjection to his soul, or to his higher powers. There was no war in his members. The body was ruled by the soul, the passions swayed by the reason. *His spirit directed the whole; it was as it were the rudder of the ship. The harmony of his threefold nature was complete.*” \*

Yet, strange to say, this author, if I do not misconceive him, denies that even unfallen Adam was a son of God. In one place, indeed (p. 11), he says that “Adam might in a lower sense be so termed, inasmuch as he received *the spirit*, his higher and religious capacities, *by God’s breathing into his nostrils*; while, inasmuch as he was not *born of the Spirit*, he was not in the fullest sense a son of God even in Paradise.” But in another passage, in the same page, he expresses his full concurrence in the following remarks of Dr Candlish: “There is not a hint of sonship in all that is said of Paradise, or of man’s sin and fall there. Nay, what is revealed of God’s treatment of Adam in the garden is palpably irreconcilable with the idea of anything like the paternal and filial relation subsisting between them, &c.” Having so said, he then proceeds to notice my objection, as stated in page 37 of this volume: “How

\* Wright’s ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 6.



came it to pass that any method of recovery was provided and announced to the transgressors, at the very time when they received their sentence? Surely, it will not bear to be denied that *this* was a fatherly, and not at all a judicial procedure, &c." And how does he attempt to obviate this objection? He says: "The reply is easy. The announcement of a coming deliverer was *more* than fatherly love,—a love too deep to be expressed by any of the analogies of earth,—a love which we must characterise, not as parental, but as divine."

I need scarcely point out the insufficiency of such a reply. Surely, if God's love to fallen Adam and his posterity, in the announcement of a coming deliverer, was "*more* than fatherly," it cannot have been anything *less* than fatherly! And though it unquestionably is "love too deep to be expressed by any of the analogies of earth," it may notwithstanding be *approximately* expressed by them. Indeed, it is too deep to be adequately expressed, not only by "the analogies of earth," but by the *language* of earth. And yet, if we are to set forth the love of God *at all*, we needs must have recourse to human words or human analogies. One thing is very evident,—that "the announcement of a coming deliverer to our first parents at the very time when they received their sentence," was *much more analogous to the conduct of a loving father, than to the procedure of one whose only relation to them was that of a strict and inflexibly righteous judge.*

2. Even with respect to *the fallen race of Adam*, I do not conceive that there is anything in "the tripartite nature of man" that is incompatible with God's fatherly relation to them.

For, be it observed, the advocates of this theory do not maintain that, in the case of fallen men, the *spirit* has been *absolutely extinguished*. They hold, on the contrary, that it still survives, although in a comparatively deadened or dormant condition. Thus, speaking of mankind as now existing, Mr Wright observes:—

"Man's superiority over the rest of the creation lies in the spiritual part of his nature, which, however, in its deadened state in the unregenerate, evidences itself only in conscience. . . . Herein lies the great difference between man and the other sentient creation; whatever signs or appearances of reason may be found among the latter, there are no signs whatever among them of any religious faculty. . . . Conscience, often darkened, often defiled, often almost silenced, still remains, even in the most debased of the human race, like a broken pillar reminding ever of the glorious

temple once reared in Eden, and even still, ruin as it is, telling of the dignity and superiority of man over the other parts of the earthly creation." \*

To the same effect are the following remarks of Mr Heard :—

"It is important to see where to draw the line when we say that man is fallen, and that the spirit is dead in trespasses and sins. The spirit is dead as to all higher exercises of faith, hope, and charity; *but not so dead as to have lost all fear of God, all sense of dependence on Him, or all sense that His law is the supreme standard of right. Were man to lose this remains of the spirit which we call conscience, then he would have no sin*, farther than a dog can do evil by snatching a bone, regardless of the beating which it knows is in store for it. So our Lord says to the Pharisees, 'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth.' . . . As conscience, then, or God-consciousness, is the *differentia* between man and brute, so, on the other hand, it is the germ of that glorious faculty which, when quickened by God the Holy Spirit, renews us in the image of God. *Thus all men have a Pneuma*; but none are Pneumatical save they who are led by the Spirit of God. And again, when conscience is raised from a mere dormant capacity to become an active habit, it not only witnesses for God, but also delights in Him, serves Him, and longs to know Him more perfectly." †

From these statements it is evident that, according to this theory, the *Pneuma*, or spiritual part of man's nature, *still exists in him* even in his fallen state, although it be dormant or deadened to such an extent as to need the regenerating agency of the Holy Spirit, in order to qualify it for the full discharge of its proper functions. Indeed, were the case otherwise,—were man, as the consequence of the Fall, deprived altogether of that part of his constitution by which he knows, and loves, and serves God, he would then be, not only depraved, but brutalised,—reduced to a level with the inferior orders of the animal creation,—and excluded from the number, not only of the sons of God, but even of the responsible subjects of God's moral government.

Accordingly we find that, notwithstanding the Fall, men are represented in sundry passages of Scripture as still in a measure possessing that likeness to God by virtue of which they may be regarded as His offspring. (*Supra*, p. 30.) And in many other

\* Wright's 'Fatherhood,' p. 4, 5, 35.

† Heard's 'Tripartite Nature of Man,' p. 158-160.

passages adduced in the preceding Lectures,—passages the force of which, I venture to say, is unimpaired by all the ingenious comments of Mr Wright and Dr Candlish,—the fatherly relation which God bears to the human family, even in their fallen state, is plainly affirmed or recognised.

It is indeed true, as elsewhere I have admitted (*supra*, p. 50), that fallen men cannot rightly acknowledge God as their Father, to the effect of rendering acceptable homage to Him, or of cherishing filial confidence and affection towards Him, until they have been regenerated by His grace. But this admission, even when made to the fullest extent, does not invalidate either the fact of His pater-nity, or their obligation to acknowledge it and to act upon it. In truth, they lie under an equal disability with reference to God's magisterial relation, and generally with reference to all the relations which He bears to them. Fallen men, by reason of their native depravity,—or, if you will, by reason of “the dormant and dead-ened state of the spiritual part of their constitution,”—cannot truly acknowledge God in any of His characters. Certainly, they are just as far from a hearty and practical recognition of His sovereign authority, as from a cheerful and childlike reliance on His parental care. And hence it might as well be said, on this account, that God is not in any real sense their ruler, as that God is not in any real sense their Father.

The truth is, however, that the inability of fallen men to acknowledge God, whether as their Father or as their Lord, arises not from any absolute deprivation of the spiritual faculties necessary for so doing,—such as would evidently destroy their responsibility,—but simply from the depraved or disordered state of these faculties. It arises, not from any lack of physical power, but from the lack of a right moral disposition ; and, therefore, it cannot be regarded as in any way dissolving the relations in which they stand to God, or exempting them from the duties which spring out of these relations. God is still entitled to say to them—unable though they be to love and serve Him as they ought,—“If I be a Father, where is mine honour? And if I be a Master, where is my fear?” (Mal. i. 6.) And in thus demanding, even from fallen men, the duties incumbent on them, as His children and His servants, He must be considered as recognising the continued subsistence of those relations to Himself on which the demand is founded.

These considerations appear to me sufficient to show that the native depravity and corruption of the human race, whether we



seek to explain it on the principles of the tripartite theory of the nature of man or otherwise, is not incompatible with our views of the divine fatherhood. The Fall has not utterly extinguished or effaced that *spiritual part* of their constitution, by reason of which they are to be regarded as bearing the image of God, and numbered among His offspring. They are still children of God,—though degenerate and apostate children, who have forfeited His favour and estranged themselves from His family ; just as they are still responsible subjects of His moral government, though rebels and traitors, who wilfully provoke His wrath, and set themselves in utter defiance to His authority.

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NOTE D, *page* 63.

SUITABLENESS OF THE ATONEMENT TO HUMAN  
WANTS.

“ Foremost among those faculties which have survived the Fall, and to the resuscitation of which religion is directed, stands Conscience, or the Moral Faculty, which not only stamps our actions as right or wrong, but by the sense of good and ill desert which accompanies its exercise, actually sentences them to reward or punishment. This faculty, which we cannot help regarding as the authoritative voice of Him who made us, corresponds exactly, in its functions and its judgments, to the moral law delivered on Mount Sinai. The one is the objective, the other the subjective law, whose authority we recognise as different but parallel revelations of the one true God. And as ‘by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified,’ because none can keep its holy enactments ; so by the voice of conscience, taken by itself, shall none escape condemnation. *The Decalogue and the moral faculty are alike a ministration of death to all who hear their voice alone.* And as the law was, by its very severity, a ‘schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,’ so the condemning voice of conscience, and the sense of guilt, which is universal in our race, are the common foundation on which the Gospel teaching everywhere rests.

“ But the admonitions of conscience no more constitute the whole of our spiritual being than the moral law and its penal sanctions

were the whole of the Mosaic code, or of the personal religion of every Israelite. At least coextensive with its judgments is the hope of forgiveness, the conviction that the lawgiver can pardon as well as punish. This shows itself in the fact, noticed in Thomson's Bampton Lectures, that '*never has the mind of man, driven to construct a worship from its natural resources, invented a religion of despair.*' How is this to be accounted for? Conscience, in and by itself, speaks only of punishment to transgressors. Moreover, it actually generates a craving for punishment in the human heart—a craving which makes us wish to see criminals punished—nay, which (despite of many opposing instincts of our nature that shrink from pain and degradation) makes us crave the punishment of our own sins. *In the terms promulgated by conscience*,—however it may generate the fear of punishment, and so the wish to escape from it,—*forgiveness is impossible.* But is there no antagonistic principle co-ordinate with it, which, like the expiatory system of the Jewish law, and the promises inherited by the Israelite from his forefathers, drives away despair, and makes merey to rejoice over judgment? To answer this question philosophically, *we lack such an analysis of our whole spiritual nature as Butler has given us of the moral faculty.* But, without attempting to supply this want, we can point out some general characteristics of human nature which seem to show that the Gospel method of pardon through the atonement is more in harmony with our nature as a whole, than any other system which has ever been proposed.

“The broad fact, that men left to themselves have ‘never invented a religion of despair,’ and that all religions presuppose the possibility of forgiveness, and profess to teach the way to attain it, is proof enough that the menaces of conscience, with whatever authority they speak, are not regarded as precluding the hope of pardon. Still there is an evident difficulty in reconciling these two parts of our nature—the same difficulty which meets us in determining the diverse and apparently conflicting claims of law and grace. Hence arise two different modes of solving the great problem of religion—how man may have peace with God. The one, unable to reconcile these conflicting authorities, has followed the stronger impulse of human nature—the hope of mercy—and simply ignored the sentence and threats of the judge within the breast. This is the plan of irreligion, which hopes vaguely for pardon, and turns a deaf ear to the whispers of guilt. Such, too, is the method of some systems of religion which would teach us simply to disregard any

difficulties which may seem to hinder the assurance of immediate acceptance by God. Such, among heathens, is the system of Buddhism, which teaches man to endeavour to make himself perfect, without sacrifice, or atonement, or any recognition of guilt. Such, among professing Christians, is the teaching of the Socinian, who recognises no obstacles raised by the divine government to the impunity of sinners who repent. Such, too, in some measure, is the teaching of certain Anglican divines, who regard the barrier raised by the sense of guilt between man and God as a delusion of the wicked one, which it is the part of true wisdom to disregard.

“Against all these systems, as conflicting with human nature, every sacrifice which has been offered, even in the darkness of heathenism, has borne its testimony. Still more, the sacrifices of Judaism, which were offered by God’s appointment, bore witness that ‘without shedding of blood there was no remission.’ But far above these obscurer lights shines the brightness of the cross of Christ, revealing, in characters which cannot be mistaken, the universal law of the divine government—that sin must be either punished or expiated; and that in sacrifice alone the conflicting claims of law and grace,—of conscience condemning, and hope acquitting,—are harmoniously adjusted. The two opposing impulses of our higher nature find their satisfaction in the atonement, and in it alone; because it recognises the righteous claims of a violated law, and, at the same time, the boundless mercy of a loving God. Conscience is not blunted or outraged; because the expiation confirms its testimony to the guilt of sin, and the tremendous punishment which it deserved: and yet all our desires of happiness and communion with God are also satisfied by ‘the exceeding riches of His grace.’ The power of the atonement lies in its appeal to all the parts of our complex nature which have regard to religion, and not to one or two only; and, in part, to its awakening feelings, which, in our present degraded state, might for ever slumber, did not the power of divine grace and the preaching of the cross wake them from their secret recesses, and make their possessor for the first time conscious of their existence. And these feelings have their source in the very depths of our being—in the *consciousness of sin, the sense of guilt, the fear of punishment, the hope of forgiveness*, as well as in the *intense reciprocation of a perfect love*; and these all twine in one indissoluble chain to draw the penitent to the cross of Christ. In *it* all parts of man’s religious nature find their appropriate object, instead of one being satisfied at the expense of another.



And thus it happens that we witness in those who 'live by the faith of the Son of God,' that harmony of their inner nature which might have been pronounced impossible prior to our experience of its reality. We see *the sensitiveness of conscience*, the keenness of its perception of demerit, *growing side by side with that triumphant assurance of safety* which makes his salvation almost a present possession to the child of God. The opposite parts of his spiritual nature (which, like the Law and the Gospel, seemed at first to rend asunder his very being by their discordant impulses) are found to move in lines steadily converging to that point where, in the glory of a more perfect state, the threats of law and the hopes of pardon shall alike disappear in the light of God's presence, and 'love' shall be 'the fulfilling of the law.' " \*

The above statements, in so far as they bear on the necessity of an atonement, are strikingly corroborated by the following remarks of a late interesting and eloquent preacher, whose views were in many respects very much opposed to the commonly received doctrines of evangelical theology. The Rev. F. W. Robertson of Brighton, writing on the subject of capital punishments, observes :—

"There is a previous question to be settled: Is the object of punishment threefold only,—to serve as an example to others,—to ameliorate the offender,—and in some cases to defend society by his entire removal? Or is there a fourth element,—the expression of righteous vengeance? for I acknowledge that I cannot look upon vengeance as merely remedial. The sense of indignation which arises in the human bosom spontaneously against some crimes must, in a degree, be a reflection of that which exists in the mind of Deity. If so, there is in Him that which the Scripture calls 'wrath;' and we are not entitled, I think, to assume that all penalty is intended to affect, or can affect, the reformation of the offender. Probably some penalties are final, expressing infinite justice; and then the higher award of human law must resemble that. It is the indignation of society or of mankind, purified from all vindictiveness, expressed in a final punishment. For, doubtless, man—that is, society as distinguished from individual man—speaks in a degree with the authority of God; 'He hath committed all judgment unto Him, because He is the Son of man.' All hangs on that, Is final penalty the dignified expression of *vengeance*, putting aside the question of remedy or of social safety, and does not the element of vengeance enter into all punishment? If not, why does

\* Macdonnell's 'Donnellan Lectures,' p. 207-212.

the feeling exist, not as a sinful, but as an essential part of human nature ; in *His* words, too, and acts ?” \*

It is indeed strange that one who could feel and express so strongly the righteous indignation that naturally arises in every human breast against heinous acts of iniquity, and which, he justly argues, must be “a reflection of that which exists in the mind of Deity,” should yet conceive that in that Divine scheme, the very object of which is to deal with sin, no expression should be given to this righteous feeling on the part of God, nor any vindication offered of that attribute of the Divine character which sin has especially outraged !

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NOTE E, *page* 69.

MYSTERIOUSNESS OF THE ATONEMENT.

It is no cause for wonder that the method of redemption should be in some respects imperfectly comprehended by us. In the ordinary providence of God we often find ourselves unable to discover the reasons of His procedure. And why then should we not expect to meet with some difficulties when seeking to explain the dispensations of His grace ? Not to speak of other things in the ways of God that are unsearchable, there is one transcendent mystery in particular which ought of itself to silence every objection to the method of redemption on the ground of its mysteriousness—namely, *the permission and prevalence of sin*. This is at once an observed fact which cannot be questioned, and a perplexing mystery which cannot be resolved. And in the face of it we are certainly not warranted to take exception, on the ground of its being alike mysterious, to that method of deliverance from sin which the Gospel reveals. For it is nothing strange that the remedy provided for us should in some respects exceed our comprehension, when the evil to be remedied is equally or more inexplicable.

It ought also to be remembered that the *rationale* of the atonement is a matter with which God is more concerned than we are. It rests with *Him*, the offended party, and not with man, the party who has offended Him, to fix the terms of reconciliation. And

\* ‘Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson, M.A.,’ vol. i. p. 278.

surely we may trust Him to fix such terms as shall not be inconsistent with His character, or derogatory to His law, or subversive of His moral government. *Our part* is not so much to canvass the propriety, as humbly and cheerfully to avail ourselves of the benefits, of that method of pardon and reconciliation which He may be pleased to propose.

It is worthy of remark, besides, that *the most mysterious element in the doctrine of the atonement, as commonly received among us, cannot be got rid of by a mere denial of that doctrine.*

Those who so much object to the divine appointment of the innocent and spotless Saviour to suffer *in the room of sinners*, forget that the real mystery involved in it is, that the innocent and spotless Saviour should have been divinely appointed *to suffer at all*. And this mystery is deepened when we take into account the majesty of His person as the only-begotten Son of God. Now, that this innocent and august Person *did* suffer—that He was emphatically a “man of sorrows”—and that His sufferings (as shown in the preceding Lectures) were not merely *incidental*, but *absolutely essential* to the purposes of His mission—is a *matter of fact* which cannot be disputed, whatever be our views of the doctrine of the atonement.

On what principle, then, are His sufferings to be accounted for? They cannot be explained, like those of other sufferers, on any assignable grounds of a *personal* nature. For they were neither deserved by Him as a punishment, nor required by Him as a purifying discipline, on His own account. Make of them what you will, they were more or less *vicarious*, in respect that they must be held to have been endured by Him *for reasons and purposes pertaining to others, and not to Himself*.

Where, then, is the mighty difference between the *vicariousness* admitted by the one party, and that asserted by the other? If it be consistent with the attributes of God to appoint an innocent and divine Person to suffer, in order to assure us of the truth of Christianity—to manifest the love of the Father,—or to afford us a pattern of self-sacrifice—why may it not be consistent with the attributes of God to appoint such a Person to suffer, in order to exempt sinners from the penal consequences of their transgressions?

Certainly, in so far as *justice* is concerned in the matter, there seems to be no difference between the two cases. The sufferings of the innocent, endured for whatsoever reason, are and must needs be, as regards himself, *undeserved* sufferings. And the pardon of the



guilty, procured in whatsoever way, is and must needs be, as regards themselves, *undeserved* pardon. There is no possibility of denying these two propositions on any hypothesis as to the mediation of Christ that may be resorted to. Make of His sufferings what you will, they were unmerited by Himself, and yet they were inflicted on Him. And make of the redemption of sinners what you will, it is unmerited by themselves, and yet it is conferred upon them. If, then, as regards the divine justice there be any difficulty—arising, on the one hand, from the treatment of the innocent Saviour otherwise than *He* deserved, by subjecting Him to sufferings and death ; and, on the other hand, from the treatment of sinful men otherwise than *they* deserve by pardoning and redeeming them,—thus much is clear, that the difficulty cannot be obviated, either on the one side or on the other, by denying the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. The only way in which it could be obviated would be by denying, as regards Christ, either His innocence or His sufferings,\* and by denying, as regards mankind, either their sinfulness or their hopes of pardon.

It appears, then, that the sufferings of Christ and the pardon of sinners, when connected together as our doctrine of the atonement connects them, involve no greater difficulties, as regards the divine justice, than if they were disconnected. In saying so, however, we do not mean to affirm that the causal connection between them is free from mystery ; all that we affirm is, that there are mysteries in them whether this causal connection be asserted or denied ; and that no other purpose that we know of can be attributed to the sufferings of the innocent and well-beloved Son of God, that is more consonant either to the divine justice or to the divine benignity than the grand and gracious purpose which the Scriptures have assigned to them.

\* That Christ was a *willing* victim is doubtless a material circumstance to be taken into account in connection with this matter. It proves, as Archbishop Trench has beautifully observed, that “the endurance of Christ’s sufferings is only *not righteous* because it is *so much better* than righteous—because it moves in that higher region where law has been transfigured into love.”

NOTE F, *page 82.*THE THEORY OF SELF-SACRIFICE AS EXPLANATORY  
OF THE ATONEMENT.

Hitherto our attention has been confined to the *reasonable grounds* on which this theory of self-sacrifice is supported, as furnishing an explanation of our Lord's sufferings which is held to be more rational, and, in particular, to be more fully illustrative of the fatherly love of God, than that which is supplied by the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. I cannot refrain, however, from making a few supplementary remarks on this theory, *as tested by the authoritative teaching of Holy Scripture*. And in doing so, it is necessary to advert to the views set forth by Dr Bähr in his 'Symbolik des Mosaischen Cultus,' on which the theory of Mr Maurice is mainly founded, and with which it must evidently stand or fall.

The great leading principle of Dr Bähr's system is, *the denial of any reference in sacrifice to the guilt or penal consequences of sin*. He holds that this ordinance was intended to represent, not the forfeiture or penalty incurred by him who offered the victim, but that *surrender or sacrifice of himself*, that devotion of heart and life to the service of God, which the worshipper, by the act of sacrifice, acknowledged to be his duty, and declared to be his sincere desire. Such an acknowledgment and desire might, in certain cases, be associated with penitential feelings on account of particular transgressions, and then the sacrifice was called a sin-offering or trespass-offering. In other cases it might be associated with feelings of gratitude for past mercies, or with special engagements of duty and devotion for the future, and then the sacrifice became a thank-offering or votive peace-offering. But in no case did it imply any reference to the worshipper's *liability to condemnation*, or any substitution of the sufferings of an innocent victim for that forfeiture or penalty which the worshipper had incurred. It symbolised, not the *taking away of life* in punishment, but the *giving up of life* to God in holy self-surrender. And hence the conclusion is drawn, that the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, of which the Levitical sacrifices were typical, is not to be regarded as a vicarious or piacular offering by which satisfaction is rendered to divine justice for the sins of

men, but simply as an illustrious pattern of self-devotion, which all faithful Christians are encouraged and required to imitate.

In support of this theory Dr Bähr appeals to the words of the Lord in Lev. xvii. 11, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul." These words he considers as unfolding the true nature of the ordinance. It was not the *death* of the animal, he argues, but the sprinkling of the altar with his blood *as the emblem of life*, that held the central or prominent place in the symbolical transaction. The death was only inflicted as a means of obtaining the blood, by which, as representing the life, the atonement was made. Or if any symbolical meaning must be assigned to it, that meaning is held to be nothing more than the extinction of the selfish and carnal life of the worshipper as necessary to his consecration to the service of God.

Referring, for a full refutation of this theory, to the valuable treatise of Kurtz on 'The Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' I venture to submit the following brief remarks upon it.

Dr Bähr wholly misconceives the drift of Lev. xvii. 11, when representing it as a formal exposition of the *rationale* or principle of sacrifice. For any one who reads this passage in connection with the preceding and following verses must at once see that the *blood* is primarily referred to *as a prohibited article of food*, and that the true reason why the *blood* rather than the *death* of the victim is brought into prominence is,—not that it held, as distinguished from the death, the most important place in the symbolism of the ordinance,—but simply because there was a special necessity for thus referring to it as the subject of the prohibition.

The chief objection, however, that may be urged against this view of the meaning and intent of the Levitical sacrifices is, the *palpable incongruity*, or rather *contrariety*, between the sign employed and the thing alleged to be denoted by it. The sign is *blood*, the blood of a *slain animal*; and the thing of which it is affirmed to be significant is not *life taken away* in penal forfeiture, but *life continued and consecrated to God in active service*! Now, I venture to say that this is an interpretation of the symbol which never would have occurred to any unsophisticated mind. Blood may be appropriately held to represent *life*. But unquestionably blood *shed* represents *life ended*. When the "life of the flesh" is said to be "in the blood," this statement must be understood as



applying to the blood while still running in the veins of the living animal. When the animal has been slain, the blood that is taken from it can only be held to denote life *forfeited* and *extinguished*.

An attempt is indeed made to overcome this objection, by suggesting that the death of the victim might be symbolical of *the extinction of the selfish and carnal life*, in order that the spiritual and godly life, which the worshipper was thenceforward to lead, might be substituted for it. But this suggestion, instead of removing the difficulty, is attended with other difficulties peculiar to itself.

In the first place, it does not in the least affect the incongruity of representing the blood of a *slain victim* as an emblem, not of *life extinguished*, which it well might be, but of *life continued* and *actively employed* in the service of God, which it could not, according to any natural or intelligible reading of the symbol, be supposed to be. Besides, this suggestion assigns to the blood a double function, as symbolical both of death and of life, which, instead of lessening, rather increases the incongruity.

Further, the taking away of the life of an animal in sacrifice—more particularly of a pure and unblemished animal, perfect in its kind, as all victims were required to be—presents no analogy whatsoever to the mortifying of the selfish and carnal life of a sinful man. For the natural life of such a creature is altogether innocent—in full conformity to the instinctive laws of its being, and to the purposes which its Maker designed it to serve; whereas, the natural life of a sinner is culpable and ungodly—opposed to the laws of his being, and to the will of his Creator. Here, therefore, instead of analogy, we have contrast. We can well understand how the death of an unoffending animal should symbolise the sufferings of a guiltless Saviour in the room of the guilty; but that the ceasing of a life that is in perfect accordance with the will of God, should symbolise the ceasing of a life of selfish opposition to the will of God on the part of him who puts to death the innocent victim, is altogether unnatural and anomalous.

Again, this supplementary adjunct of the theory in question derives no support from Lev. xvii. 11, on which the theory professes to be founded. When it is there said that “the *life* of the flesh is in the blood,” the word “life” evidently signifies the mere *physical principle of vitality*, without reference to any *moral qualities* whatsoever. The “life” does not here mean “the conduct,” or “the manner of living.” There is no reference to the manner in which the life is spent, or the purposes to which it is made subservient,

but simply to "the life" or animated condition of a living animal, as opposed to the inert and insensate condition of a mass of dead matter. And as for the alleged double function which, according to the hypothesis, "the blood" is held to discharge, as symbolising, first, *the cessation of a selfish and carnal mode of living*, and afterwards *the commencement of a godly and spiritual mode of living*, there is not the least countenance given to it in the passage referred to. Nothing is there said of the symbolical transfiguration of a life distinguished by one kind of moral qualities into a life distinguished by an opposite kind of moral qualities. What the passage speaks of is something very different—namely, *the substitution of the life of one creature for the life of another creature*. "The life of the flesh," saith the Lord, "is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls," i.e., "for your lives,"—for it is the same word *nephesh* that is here used both for "life" and for "soul."

This text, then, according to its plain and obvious import, teaches the *vicarious* nature of the rite of sacrifice. *Life was given for life*—the life of the victim for the life of the offerer. It was no mere *change of the moral characteristics of one and the same creature's mode of living* that was symbolised, but a *substitution of the life of one creature for the life of another creature*, instead of which it was immolated. And this substitution took place in order to "make atonement," or literally "covering," for the life of the offerer. Nor can it be said that this "covering" or "atonement" was altogether *subjective* in its nature, affecting only the worshipper's own character and disposition; on the contrary, it was primarily of an *objective* nature, affecting his standing and position towards the God of Israel. That it was so, evidently appears from the passage itself; for God is there represented as saying, "I have given it (the blood) to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls or lives." He does not say, "*You* are to give *me* the blood upon the altar, as a symbol of the dedication of your lives to me;" but, "*I* have given *you* the blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for your lives." And the same conclusion may be drawn from the statements repeatedly made in the Book of Leviticus respecting the sin-offerings, that by means of these "an atonement shall be made for the offerer, *as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.*"\* These words plainly show that the atonement made by the sin-offerings was not merely to the effect of exercising a salutary in-

\* Lev. iv. 26, 35; v. 13, 18; vi. 7, &c.

fluence on the minds of those by whom they were offered, but to the effect of substantially ameliorating their condition and standing in relation to the God of Israel, by securing the forgiveness of their sin, or their exemption from the forfeitures and penalties annexed to it.

It is no small confirmation of the justice of these remarks on the theory of Bähr and Maurice as to the nature of sacrifice, that is furnished by the fact, that this theory is utterly opposed to the sentiments entertained respecting that ordinance by uninspired Jewish writers of ancient times, and also by heathens of every age and of every nation. I cannot afford space for adducing the abundant testimonies by which this fact is incontrovertibly established. They will be found in Outram's elaborate 'Dissertation on Sacrifice,' and also in the Notes appended to Magee's 'Discourses on the Atonement.' But, assuming it to be a fact—which few, if any, will venture to deny—it bears with crushing weight against a theory of sacrifice which is palpably at variance with the views of that ordinance entertained by all those who were habituated to the observance of it.

In regard to this point, I cannot refrain from quoting the following judicious observations of Mr Rigg:—

"The peculiarity," he remarks, "of this view of sacrifice set forth by Bähr, Maurice, and their followers, is that the death of the victim is made to symbolise, directly and properly, *not punishment*, but *privilege and duty*, the highest privilege and the noblest duty—that of self-consecration to the service of God. Now, it is of the essence of a symbol, that it be adapted to strike the common mind at once, and to speak out its meaning to the sense and understanding of all who are concerned to know it. A symbol must have a plain, and not a subtle or abstruse interpretation. Symbols may become obscure by lapse of time, or loss of the history connected with them: but it is inconceivable that their original significance should have been dark or subtle to those for whom they were appointed. The wider and more promiscuous the circle, too, in the midst of which the symbol was set up, so much the greater need is there of its being plain and obvious in its purport. A national symbol must either refer to some event of the national history known by all, or to some common idea or feeling of the nation. But most of all must a religious symbol, intended not only to represent the faith of one nation, but of all mankind, be adapted to convey its meaning plainly and unmistakably to all



men. Nothing could be more surprising than that such a symbol should be intended to be interpreted in a sense opposed to that which the feelings of mankind would naturally put upon it, and which, in fact, has been universally put upon it, except by a few subtle and mystical thinkers in modern times. Yet, such would really be the case, if that interpretation were put upon the rite of sacrifice, for which the new school of anti-evangelical interpreters contend. That event which, in the ideas and feelings of all men, is associated with evil and with fear, is by them made to be the symbol of the best and holiest duties, with which are ever connected the purest and most exalted satisfaction to the spirit, the highest privileges, and the most blessed hopes. And that rite which not the Jews only, but the whole world in all its races, has ever held to be symbolical of guilt and punishment, is made to yield a subtle and sublimated sense, which transforms death inflicted, and blood poured out, into life consecrated, transfigured, and ennobled with a pure and spiritual glory." "Strange masque it is, that should thus habit filial devotion in garments of terror,—which should make dire, bleeding death to image and express the union of the grateful soul to God in obedient life and service!"\*

On these grounds, we hold the theory of Dr Bähr respecting the symbolical import of the Levitical sin-offerings to be untenable. And if it be so, then the doctrine of Mr Maurice, in so far as it represents the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus Christ as a mere illustration of the principle of *self-sacrifice* or *self-devotion* to the service of God, must unavoidably fall to the ground along with it. For it is much too clear a matter to be disputed, except by those who are ready to ignore or set aside the most explicit testimonies of Holy Scripture, that the sin-offerings of Judaism were typical or prefigurative of the great sacrificial offering of the Son of God.

But this is not all. For apart altogether from the proper symbolical import of the Levitical sin-offerings, we find that in almost all the passages of the New Testament in which sacrificial terms are applied to our Lord's sufferings, *express reference* is made to *the penal consequences of sin*, as having been *borne by Him*, and *remitted to us* through His endurance of them. Thus, it is not only said that "He made a sacrifice of Himself," but that He "*put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself,"†—not only that "He offered Himself to God," but that "Christ was once offered *to bear the sins of many*."‡

\* Rigg's 'Modern Anglican Theology,' p. 371, 372.

† Heb. ix. 26.

‡ Heb. ix. 28.

And when Himself instituting the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in which His death was to be showed forth until He should come again, He said, with evident allusion to those sacrifices by which the Mosaic covenant had of old been ratified, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins.*"\* From these and similar statements, it is undeniable that whatever may have been the symbolical import of other sacrifices, that of the Lord Jesus must, at all events, be regarded, not as a mere example of self-consecrating devotedness, but as a vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice, whereby "the sins of many were borne by Him," to the effect of "putting them away," or securing "the remission of them."

Besides, there are many other passages of the New Testament which cannot be said to have any sacrificial reference, but in which we are taught that Christ "died for our sins;" that "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree;" that "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" that "He came to give His life a ransom for many;" that "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." In these, and numerous other statements of a like import, there is no particular allusion to the rite of sacrifice. And yet the vicarious and expiatory character of the sufferings of Christ is unequivocally declared in them.

In short, the doctrine of the atonement, as commonly received among us, is one of which the Bible is absolutely full. And we may venture to say, that if it be *not* conveyed in the plain and explicit statements of the inspired writers with respect to it, there must be no terms that are capable of expressing it. In other words, we must hold it to be a doctrine which, however true and however important, it was utterly impossible for God in human language to reveal to us.

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It is proper to supplement the above remarks by observing that much of the sacrificial phraseology applied to the sufferings of Christ in the New Testament, *is of Gentile and not of Jewish derivation*, and that much of it occurs in writings which were addressed to Christian converts, not from Judaism only, but from heathenism.

This consideration is all the more important, because those modern assailants of the atonement, who most earnestly strive to eliminate

\* Ex. xxiv. 8; Mat. xxvi. 28.

from the Jewish sacrifices that expiatory or vicarious element to which they are opposed, have most freely and fully admitted the existence of it as an essential and characteristic element in the heathen sacrifices. Thus Dr Young says, "Undoubtedly the pagan sacrifices, by those who offered them, were held to be expiatory."\* Dr Bushnell observes, "Expiations are always conspicuous in their meaning. No man could ever raise a doubt of the expiatory object of the pagan sacrifices."† And Mr Maurice admits that the expiatory sense of the words ἱλασμος and ἱλαστήριον "may be gathered from all the history of the heathen world," and that "any other view of the case is incredible."‡ Indeed, it is usual with writers of this school to speak reproachfully of vicarious expiation as altogether a *heathenish notion*, and to lay it down as the grand distinction between the worship of the true God in all ages and that of Polytheism, that the sacrifices of the former did not include this notion, whereas it was included and prominently exhibited in those of the latter.

It is proper, therefore, to remind these writers and their followers, that the very words by which the sacrifice of Christ is described in the New Testament—as, for example, θυσία, προσφορὰ, ἱλασμός, ἀγιάζω, καθαίρω, ἱλάσκω—are borrowed from the sacrificial ritual of the *Greeks*, and that these words are freely, familiarly, forcibly, and without the slightest qualification, applied to our Lord's sufferings, in discourses and epistles addressed to Christian communities, of which a large proportion of the members were of *Gentile* extraction. Setting aside, then, the converts from Judaism altogether, it is not to be questioned that the converts from heathenism, and the surrounding heathens yet unconverted, in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and other places to which the apostolic letters were addressed, and in which at a very early period the Gospel narratives were circulated, would be perfectly sure to attach to these expressions, unless expressly warned and certified to the contrary, those same notions of *expiation* and *substitution*, which in their own habitual use of them the words were understood to convey. This, indeed, is fully admitted by Mr Maurice, who says in the passage above referred to, "So far am I from pleading that these words had not the sense which we should gather from all the history of the heathen world that they must have had, or that this sense was not one which would naturally suggest itself to the readers of

\* Young's 'Life and Light of Men,' p. 252.

† Bushnell on 'Vicarious Sacrifice,' p. 426.

‡ Maurice's 'Doctrine of Sacrifice,' p. 154.



Paul's Epistle, baptised men though they were, that I would earnestly press the reflection on you that any other view of the ease is incredible." And then he adds, that in applying such expressions "to a Christian use, *their heathen signification must be, not modified, but inverted*" !

What, then, are we to think of the conduct of the apostles in freely applying these words to the death of Christ, if the meaning which they intended thereby to convey were such as it is "incredible" that the words should naturally have suggested to their readers? If, as Mr Maurice affirms, "*the heathen signification of the words, when they are applied to a Christian use, must be not merely modified but INVERTED ;*" or if, as Mr Jowett maintains, "*the heathen and Jewish sacrifices rather show us what the sacrifice of Christ WAS NOT, than what it was ;*"\* how then are we to account for the conduct of the apostles in applying to the death of Christ, without scruple or reservation, and without the least warning or indication of a change of meaning, those very expressions which above all others they ought to have avoided, as they would not be thought to teach the very opposite of what they meant to teach ; expressions which require to be absolutely "inverted," as regards their well-known and current signification, before they can become the vehicles of Christian truth—expressions which, if the views of Messrs Maurice and Jowett be well founded, were sure to mislead those to whom they were addressed, and actually have misled the vast majority of Christians in all ages into errors of a most serious kind respecting the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel? Certainly the use of such language by the apostles must, on the principles of these writers, be regarded as inconsistent, I do not say with their *inspiration* merely, but with their soundness of judgment and accuracy of apprehension regarding the most vital matters of Christian doctrine, and as utterly subversive of any confidence we might have placed in them as authoritative teachers or expounders of revealed truth.

It avails nothing to say, in explanation of this apostolic usage, that the Greek sacrificial expressions thus employed by them had been previously applied to the Jewish sacrifices in the Septuagint. For this only shows that those learned men who made this ancient translation of the Old Testament, regarded the words in question as fair equivalents for the corresponding words in the original Hebrew ;

\* Jowett, 'Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans,' ii. 479.

and if in this respect the Septuagint translators were mistaken, there was so much the greater need that the apostles, when quoting these misapplied phrases from the Septuagint, as well as when themselves making a like inaccurate use of them, should give warning, which they have never done, that "their natural signification must be, not only modified, but *inverted*," in order to guard their readers, and especially their Gentile readers, against an otherwise unavoidable misconception of the most essential article of the Christian faith.

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NOTE G, *page* 84.

THE ATONEMENT NOT THE CAUSE, BUT THE RESULT  
AND MANIFESTATION OF THE FATHER'S LOVE.

I am surprised to find that the utterance I have repeatedly given to the statement which forms the title of this Note, has led some critics in the Anglican Church to speak of me as "holding a sort of modified Calvinism," and as "occupying exactly the same position with those who in America are called *New-Light Calvinists*."

How far, in this respect, I have been fairly represented, I leave my readers to judge from the following references.

*Dr Charles Hodge*, who is one of the ablest defenders of what is styled "*the Old School of Calvinism*" in the United States, expresses himself thus, with reference to the matter in question:—

"The grace of the Gospel is not obscured by the satisfaction of Christ, but rendered the more conspicuous. *God is not rendered merciful by the atonement (as some slanderously affirm that we say); on the contrary, the atonement flows from His infinite love. . . .* It was God's infinite love that devised the plan of redemption; and it was so devised that the exercise of love should be perfectly consistent with holiness, and in order that God might be just in justifying sinners. Surely, then, our doctrine does not obscure the grace of the Gospel, at least as to the origin of the plan of mercy." \*

The late *Dr Cunningham*, whom no one will represent as holding "a modified Calvinism," speaks to the like effect:—

"Socinians," he says, "represent the generally received doctrine of atonement as implying that God the Father is an inexorable

\* 'Princeton Essays,' 1st series, p. 281.

tyrant, who insisted on the rigorous execution of the threatenings of the law until Christ interposed, and by His offering up of Himself satisfied God's demands, and thereby introduced into the divine mind a totally different state of feeling in regard to sinners ; the result of which was, that He pardoned in place of punishing them. *This, of course, is not the doctrine of the atonement, but a mere caricature of it.* Scripture plainly teaches, and the advocates of the atonement maintain—not only as being perfectly consistent with their doctrine, but as a constituent part of it—that love to men, and a desire to save them from ruin, existed eternally in the divine mind—that this love and compassion led Him to devise and execute a plan of salvation, and to send His Son to save sinners by offering an atonement for their sins. *The atonement, then, was the consequence, and not the cause, of God's love to men, and of His desire to save them.* It introduced no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before, though it certainly removed obstacles which other principles of His nature and government interposed to the full outflowing of the love and compassion which existed, and opened up a channel by which God, in full accordance with, and in glorious illustration of all His perfections, might bestow upon men pardon and all other spiritual blessings, and finally eternal life.”\*

If more ancient authorities, as to this matter, be deemed requisite, I may quote the following statement of *Dr Thomas Goodwin*, one of the greatest of the Puritan divines, and an influential member of the Westminster Assembly.

“Christ on purpose useth this speech (John xvi. 26, 27) so as to dash out of their hearts that conceit which harboureth in many of ours, who look upon God in the matter of salvation as one who is hardly entreated to save sinners, and with whom Christ, through the backwardness of His heart, hath much ado ; and we are apt to think that when He doth come off to pardon, He doth it only at Christ's entreaty, having otherwise no innate motion in Himself sufficient to incline His heart to it. . . . You are deceived, says Christ ; it is otherwise : my Father's heart is as much towards you, and for your salvation, as mine is ; Himself, of Himself, loveth you. And the truth is, that God took up as vast a love to us of Himself at first as ever He hath borne us since, and *all that Christ doth for us is but the expression of that love which was taken up originally in God's own heart.* Thus we find that out of that love He gave Christ for us (John iii. 16). Yea, Christ's death was but a means to commend

\* ‘Historic Theology,’ vol. ii. p. 270.



or set forth that love of God unto us (Rom. v. 8). Yea, Christ adds not one drop of love to God's heart, but only draws it out." \*

*Charnock*, another highly distinguished Puritan writer, has written a long and elaborate treatise in order to show that *God the Father is the original and principal author of the scheme of reconciliation*. In the course of this argument he makes the following statements, among many others of like import that might be adduced :—

“If the first motion came not from the Father, it would represent Him as a hard master, negligent of the good of His creatures, without bowels, and only won by the importunities of His Son to have pity upon us. The sending of Christ is the ground of the honour due to the Father in the work of redemption. If the Father were not then the chief author, the honour of the love of Christ would not redound to Him; it would not be ‘to the praise of the glory of His grace’ (Eph. i. 6), but to the praise of the glory of the grace of the Son. Herein is the love of the Father, that He was placable, desirous to be at peace, and that He appoints His Son to procure it upon such honourable terms to Himself, that He might communicate His goodness through a Mediator to the polluted and rebellious world. The love of the Father in this dispensation is as great in moving it, as the love of Christ was in consenting.”

“It was the will of God our Father that Christ should give Himself for our sins; wherein God acted not only as a just judge, to have the honour of His law maintained, but as a tender father, out of a paternal affection to restore the creature to happiness. The apostle, therefore, lays our atonement upon the will of God, whereby Christ was authorised to this work.”

“*Christ did not die to render God compassionate to us*, but to open the passage for His bowels to flow down upon us, with honour to His justice. God's bowels wrought within Himself; but the sentence pronounced by justice was a bar to the flowing of them upon men. Christ was sent to remove that by His death, that the mercy which sprang up from eternity in the heart of God might freely flow down to the creature. . . . The satisfaction of Christ doth not impair the kindness of God; His pity to us did precede the appointment of Christ. It was by the grace of God that Christ tasted death for us.” †

To the same effect are the following statements of Dr Owen, whose strictly Calvinistic principles will not be called in question :—

\* Goodwin's Works (Nichol's edition), vol. iv. p. 86.

† Charnock's Works (Nichol's edition), vol. iii. p. 355, 409, 476.

“This work, of bringing many sons unto glory, is signally ascribed by the apostles unto God the Father, *whose love, wisdom, and grace believers are principally to eye in the whole work of their salvation*, wrought out and accomplished by Jesus Christ. He gave and sent His Son to be our Saviour and Redeemer, so that in Christ’s whole work, in all that He did and suffered, He obeyed the command and fulfilled the will of the Father. Him did God the Father ‘send,’ and ‘seal,’ and ‘give,’ and ‘set forth,’ as the Scripture everywhere expresseth it. And our Lord Jesus Christ everywhere remits us to the consideration of the love, will, and authority of His Father, in all that He did, taught, or suffered; so seeking the glory of Him that sent Him.” \*

I deem it unnecessary to quote farther testimonies. Those above adduced are amply sufficient to show that the atonement is viewed by its intelligent and enlightened advocates, not as the procuring cause of God’s love to a sinful world, but as the most astonishing manifestation of His pre-existing love that could possibly be imagined; and that those who represent the mediatorial work of Christ as “averting from us the wrath of an implacable Being who is in Himself disinclined to show mercy to us, until, by the intercession and sufferings of His beloved Son, a sullen and ungracious pardon is extorted from Him,” are grossly slandering or caricaturing, instead of fairly stating, the doctrine of the atonement.

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#### NOTE H, *page* 96.

#### IMPUTATION OF SIN TO CHRIST.

It is not a little remarkable that a writer, who disclaims the notion of *imputed guilt* as implied in the atonement, should yet speak of our Lord as making, on the part of men, “a confession of sin which has in it all the elements of a perfect contrition and repentance,” and should represent this penitential confession of our sins as “due from the Son of God as in our nature and our true brother.” It is not easy to see how such statements can be consistently maintained, except upon the principle that there was on the part of Christ an imputation to Himself of human sins, in

\* Owen’s Works (Goold’s edition), vol. xx. p. 379, 380.

respect, not merely of *their liability to penal consequences*, but of their *inherent sinfulness and moral culpability*. And this is a principle which is emphatically disavowed by all intelligent advocates of the doctrine of imputation.

That doctrine, indeed, has frequently been represented by its adversaries as implying that the *moral turpitude* of our sins was transferred to Christ, to the effect of rendering Him personally sinful and ill-deserving, and that the *moral excellence* of His righteousness is transferred to believers, to the effect of rendering them personally upright and commendable. Nor is it to be denied that some Antinomian writers have broadly maintained this view of imputation, and that some others, not professedly Antinomian, have occasionally expressed themselves in unguarded language that seems to give it countenance. Such a view, however, is altogether indefensible. The imputation of our sins to Jesus Christ has reference exclusively to their legal forfeitures and liabilities. It implies no such thing as a transference to Him of their inherent sinfulness or moral culpability. Indeed, such a transference is impossible in the nature of things. Our sins, as regards their moral qualities, are our own, and cannot by imputation become another's. Their legal liabilities may be laid to the account of another party, who undertakes, with the sanction of the supreme Judge, to bear these legal liabilities in our stead. And this, by a *metonymy* of the cause for the effect, may be *figuratively* spoken of as a transference of the sins themselves. But there can be no *literal* transference of the sins, to the effect of making him who has not committed them a sinful person, and of rendering us, who have committed them, pure and sinless.

I may quote, as to this point, the following statement of John Owen, whose sentiments, as is well known, were thoroughly Calvinistic: "It must be observed," he says,\* "respecting the imputation of that which is not antecedently our own, that no imputation of this kind accounts those unto whom anything is imputed *to have themselves done the things* which are imputed to them. That were not to *impute*, but to *err* in judgment, and indeed utterly to overthrow the whole nature of gracious imputation. But it is to make that to be ours by imputation which was not ours before, *unto all ends and purposes whereunto it would have served* if it had been ours. It is, therefore, a manifest mistake of their own which some persons make the ground of a charge on the doctrine of imputation. For

\* Owen's Works (Goold's edition), vol. v. p. 168, 169.



they say, 'If our sins were imputed to Christ, then must He *be esteemed to have done what we have done amiss*, and so be the greatest sinner that ever was ;' and on the other side, 'If His righteousness be imputed to us, then are we *esteemed to have done what He did*, and so to stand in no need of the pardon of sin.' But this is against the nature of imputation, which proceeds on no such judgment ; but on the contrary judgment, that we ourselves have done nothing of what is imputed to us, nor Christ anything of what is imputed to Him."

That this statement of Owen is in perfect harmony with the views of all intelligent advocates of the doctrine of imputation, will be seen by referring to an able dissertation on the subject contained in the first series of the 'Princeton Theological Essays.'

It appears, then, that the imputation of our sins to Jesus Christ implies only His being made liable to the endurance of their legal penalties, without any transference to Him of their moral turpitude or ill-desert. And when so regarded, there are not wanting analogies in the dealings of men that may be used in illustration of it. Thus, the debts of a person for whom I have become security may be said to be reckoned or imputed to me. But how, or to what effect? Simply to the effect of making me *legally answerable for the payment of them* ; but not at all to the effect of holding me *morally culpable* for the reckless speculation, extravagance, or fraud with which the debtor may have been chargeable in contracting them. In like manner, when Paul wrote to Philemon concerning Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account ; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it,"\* we cannot suppose the apostle's meaning to have been, that he was willing to be held chargeable, in the judgment of Philemon, with the moral turpitude of any fraud or breach of trust which Onesimus might have committed. All that he meant evidently was, that he was willing to take upon himself the *consequences* or *liabilities* which rested on Onesimus on account of what had been done by him,—to make reparation for any wrong he might have inflicted,—or to pay any debt which he might have incurred ; so that Onesimus might, in consideration of Paul becoming thus answerable, be freed from these liabilities.

It is in this sense that we are to understand the imputation of our sins to Jesus Christ, when He is said to have "borne them," or to have had them "laid upon Him." The meaning of it is, not that

\* Philemon 18, 19.

the moral turpitude of our iniquities was transferred to Him, so as to make Him personally sinful and ill-deserving, but simply that having, with the sanction of God, the Judge of all, undertaken to be our substitute, and made Himself accountable for our sins, He was dealt with as if these sins had been His own, by undergoing forfeitures or penalties on account of them; just as a surety, without the least impeachment of his own personal integrity and rectitude, is held bound to discharge the unfulfilled obligations of the person for whom he has made himself responsible.

Now, I need scarcely observe that this truly reasonable as well as scriptural view of the nature of imputation, is quite inconsistent with any such thing as a *penitential confession of sins* by him to whom they are imputed.

As bearing on this point, I may quote the following remarks from the 'Princeton Theological Essays' above referred to: "It has always struck us as rather singular, that while those who hold the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, do at the same time hold the imputation of our sins to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to us, we seldom or never hear (from Calvinists at least) the same objections to the idea of imputation in the two latter cases as in the first. Is there any one who has the hardihood to charge the whole Calvinistic world (who teach or preach the doctrine of imputation) with believing that Christ personally and properly committed the sins which are said to be imputed to Him? or that the moral turpitude of these sins was transferred to Him? Now, we ask, why is this? . . . We are asked at every turn, *if we have ever repented of Adam's sin?* Why is it not demanded of us, *if Christ ever repented of our sins?* We have never been so unhappy as to have our hearts torn by being told that we believe and teach that the blessed Saviour became morally a sinner by having our moral character transferred to Him. If this is imputation, if this 'transfer of moral character' is included in it, we have not words to express our deep abhorrence of the doctrine. . . . We do not harbour the idea, however, that our brethren can seriously make such a charge: nor can they imagine that when we speak of the imputed righteousness of Christ, we are so insane as to mean to assert that His moral excellence was transferred to us. They never ask us *whether we feel self-approbation and complacency for what Christ did* (any more than they ask, *whether Christ repented of our sins*). Why then ask us *if we feel remorse and self-reproach for what Adam did?* We say, then, that the fact that Calvinists speak in the same terms of the imputation of

our sins to Christ, and of His righteousness to us, which they use of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, is an argument of conclusive force to prove that they do not consider either the idea of personal identification, or the transfer of moral character, as included in the doctrine of imputation." \*

Perhaps it may be thought that the several cases of imputation adduced in the above extract are not strictly parallel.† But this is a matter which we are not for the present called to discuss. Our sole object in quoting the passage is to show that the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of His righteousness to us, are not held, by the strictest Calvinists, to imply that *Christ experienced contrition and repentance for our transgressions*, or that *we feel complacency and self-approbation for His perfect rectitude*.

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NOTE I, *page* 118.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN NATURAL AND MORAL LAWS.

It is one of the prevailing errors of the present day—an error into which Dr Young and Mr Robertson of Brighton appear to have fallen—to overlook the distinction between the Moral Law and those arrangements of the physical world which are commonly designated “laws of nature.” These two kinds of “laws” cannot be ranked under the same category. The “laws of nature” do not, in themselves considered, impose upon us any moral obligation. In so far as they are known, indeed, we are bound to have respect to them; not, however, by reason of any obligation upon our conscience springing from the laws themselves, but by reason of an obligation springing from the Moral Law, which prescribes *prudence* as a branch of our duties, and requires us so to act, with reference to outward objects, as to secure our own safety and welfare.

As a proof of the radical difference, in this respect, between physical laws and moral laws, it may be observed that, in the case of *the former*, we are fully warranted to counteract, as far as we

\* ‘Princeton Theological Essays,’ p. 121.

† There is this specialty in the case of Adam's sin, that, along with the imputation of it, there is entailed upon us that native depravity which is the source of all our actual transgressions.



can, the operation of one physical law by availing ourselves of the operation of another ; whereas, in the case of *the latter*, we are not warranted to violate one moral obligation with a view to the fulfilment of another. And yet, if the two kinds of "laws" were on the same footing, the man who ascends in a balloon, or sails in an iron ship, so as to counteract the law of gravitation, would be no less truly criminal than the man who violates the law of justice in order to fulfil the claims of charity, commits "pious frauds" in order to advance the cause of religion, or in any other way "does evil that good may come."

Further, if the suffering which ensues on the breach (so to call it) of a law of nature be classed under the same head with the punishment of a moral offence, then must the attempt to remove or alleviate such suffering be denounced as a crime committed against the Supreme Governor, just as it would be an act of rebellion against an earthly governor to rescue a prisoner from custody, or to deliver a condemned criminal from the scaffold. So palpable are the absurdities involved in this identification of moral laws with eosmical arrangements.

For a full illustration of this topic I may refer to the admirable treatise of Dr James Buchanan, entitled 'Faith in God and Modern Atheism Compared,' vol. ii. p. 151-171. And in more special reference to the atonement, I cannot refrain from quoting the following clear and able statement of Dr Candlish :—

"Satisfaction is the offering of a compensation, or of an equivalent, for some wrong that has been done. The idea of it is founded on that sense of justice which is inherent and ineradicable in every human bosom. When we see an injury inflicted, resentment rises within us ; and it is not appeased until redress is given to the injured party, and an adequate retribution inflicted on the wrongdoer. This is an original conviction or instinct of our moral nature. It recognises the necessity of satisfaction when a man breaks the law of equity or honour to his fellow-man. It recognises the necessity of satisfaction, also, when a man breaks the law of duty to his God. Its appeal is to law. It is not, however, to law as the generalised expression merely of what we observe in the sequence of events and the succession of cause and effect that it appeals ; but to law as implying authority and right on the one hand, obligation and responsibility on the other.

"It would be absurd to speak of satisfaction being given for a breach of the so-called law of gravity, by which a heavy body when

unsupported falls to the ground ; or of the law of heat, by which a finger thrust into the fire is burned ; or of any of the laws of health, by which excess breeds disease, and a disordered body makes a disordered mind. Such laws admit of no compensation or equivalent in any case coming instead of the result naturally and necessarily wrought out under them. If I fall, I break the law of gravity in one view, for I have not observed with sufficient care the conditions of my safety under it. But, in another view, the law is not broken—it tells upon me, and I take the consequences. There is no wrong here ; no injury for which compensation may be made ; no breach demanding satisfaction. If all laws were of that nature,—if that were the character of the whole government of God,—the idea of satisfaction would be impossible.

“ But once let in the thought of *moral obligation*—let law be the expression of the freewill of a ruler, binding authoritatively the freewill of the subject—let it be the assertion of right and the imposing of duty—then, when a breach of that law occurs, we instinctively feel that satisfaction is due ; and to meet the case, it must be satisfaction bearing some analogy and proportion, in its nature and amount, to the law that has been broken.

“ All this is irrespective of consequences. Apart altogether from the calculation of chances or probabilities as to what evil may result from the wrong, and how that evil may be obviated, the wrong itself is felt to require redress. If the wrong-doer were alone in the universe, we have an instinct which teaches us that there ought to be redress ; a righteous instinct which craves for redress, and will not rest content without it. And the redress must be either adequate retribution inflicted on the offender, or some fair equivalent or compensation instead.” \*

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#### NOTE K, *page* 136.

#### SUFFICIENCY OF THE ATONEMENT FOR ALL SINNERS.

The *sufficiency* of the atonement for the salvation of all sinners is no less earnestly maintained by those who affirm than by those who deny its special destination. Thus Owen observes : “ To the

\* Candlish on the Atonement, p. 134-136.

honour of Jesus Christ we affirm, that such and so great was the dignity and worth of His death and blood-shedding,—of so precious a value, of such an infinite fulness and sufficiency was this oblation of Himself, that it was every way able and perfectly sufficient to redeem, justify, reconcile, and save all the sinners in the world, to satisfy the justice of God for all the sins of all mankind, and to bring them every one to everlasting glory. This fulness and sufficiency of the merit of the death of Christ is a foundation for the general publishing of the Gospel to every creature ; because the way of salvation which it declares is wide enough for all to walk in. There is enough in the remedy which it brings to light to heal all their diseases, and to deliver them from all their evils. If there were a thousand worlds, the Gospel of Christ might on this ground be preached to them all, there being enough in Christ for the salvation of them all, if so be they will derive virtue from Him by touching Him in faith.”\*

To the same effect is the following statement of Dr Hodge : “The righteousness of Christ, consisting in the obedience and death demanded by the law under which all men are placed, is *adapted to all men*. It is also of infinite value, being the righteousness of the Eternal Son of God, and therefore *sufficient for all*. On these two grounds—its adaptation to all and its sufficiency for all—rests the offer made in the Gospel to all. *Who are eventually to be saved by it we do not know*. But it is of such a nature and value that whosoever accepts of it shall be saved. . . . The reason why any man perishes is, not that there is no righteousness provided suitable and adequate to his case, or that it is not freely offered to all that hear the Gospel, but simply because he wilfully rejects the proffered salvation.”†

Now, if those who believe the atonement to have been specially destined for the *actual salvation* of the elect, do nevertheless maintain, thus fully and unreservedly, *its suitableness and sufficiency for the salvation of all sinners*, can they be justly charged with detracting from it as a manifestation of God’s fatherly love to all mankind ?

Of course it is only with reference to the *non-elect* that the fatherly love of God can be held to be obscured by them. And hence the question comes to be, Wherein does the atonement present a less gracious aspect *to those who are not eventually saved*,

\* Owen’s Works (Goold’s edition), vol. x. p. 297.

† ‘Princeton Essays,’ 1st series, p. 291.



according to our view of its special destination, than according to the views entertained by those who differ from us?

1. The Arminians, in the first place,—rejecting as they do the doctrine of unconditional election altogether,—are shut up to the position that God, in providing the atonement, had no purpose to secure by it the *actual salvation* of *any* sinners, but simply to remove obstacles out of the way of their being saved,—to open a wide door by which any who choose may enter into the way of eternal life,—to offer such a sacrifice for sin as should make it compatible with the attributes and government of God to save those who shall faithfully comply with the terms of the Gospel.

It seems evident, then, that, according to the Arminian doctrine, *all men* are in precisely the same position in which *the non-elect* are according to the Calvinistic doctrine;—that is to say, they are all in the position of having a perfectly suitable and sufficient atonement freely offered to their acceptance, *but without any further provision that all, or any of them, shall accept of it, so as to be actually saved.* The atonement *per se*, according to the Arminian view, *does nothing more for all men* than, according to the Calvinistic view, *it does even for the non-elect.* It does not, *per se*, secure their actual salvation, but merely renders salvation *attainable by them on condition of their repenting and believing the Gospel.* Now, certainly, it cannot be said to do *less than this*, according to the doctrine of the most decided Calvinists, who hold, in the words of Owen, that “Christ’s oblation of Himself was every way sufficient to redeem and save all the sinners in the world, and to satisfy the justice of God for all the sins of all mankind,” and that “if there were a thousand worlds, the Gospel of Christ might on this ground be preached to them all, there being enough in Christ for the salvation of them all, if so be they will derive virtue from Him by faith.”

2. But how does the case stand with those semi-Arminians (if we may so call them) who believe in the doctrine of unconditional election, and yet deny the special destination of the atonement for the benefit of those who are eventually saved? Can it be truly said that, according to *their* view, the atonement exhibits a more gracious manifestation of the fatherly love of God to sinful men, than according to the view of it held by those who differ from them? I cannot think so. They do indeed express themselves in very broad and unqualified language respecting the universal benefits of the Redeemer’s sacrifice, as extending alike to every member of the human race. But, when we ask them to explain more particularly the exact

amount and import of their statements, it very soon appears that the common benefits, held by them to flow from the Redeemer's sacrifice to all mankind, are really no other than those which we, who differ from them respecting the destination of the atonement, do nevertheless admit to have flowed from it with the same unrestricted and indiscriminate universality.

For, what do they really mean when affirming that "an atonement has been provided alike for all, and is intended for the benefit alike of all"? Do they mean that "an atonement is provided and intended for all, *to the effect of securing that all shall be eventually saved by it*"? Do they mean that "God, in appointing the Redeemer's sacrifice, designed that it should procure for all sinners that grace of the Holy Spirit which is necessary to bring them to a cordial and saving reception of it"? By no means. This would be at variance with their own doctrine of a *designedly limited application* of the atonement. They hold that the elect alone shall be eventually saved, and that it is God's purpose to confer on them alone that efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit by which the atonement is savingly applied.

In what sense, then, consistently with their own principles, can we understand them as affirming that the sacrifice of Christ was provided alike for all sinners? In no sense that I can think of beyond *this*, that the sacrifice of Christ *has laid a suitable and sufficient basis for the salvation of all men*, IF SO BE THEY WOULD AVAIL THEMSELVES OF IT,—or, that in respect of intrinsic worth or virtue, it lacks nothing of what is requisite for the redemption of the whole of our sinful race, "if peradventure God should be pleased to give them repentance unto the acknowledgment of the truth."

The fact is that, as regards the *actual attainment* of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, there is a limitation on the principles of either party; while, as regards *the removal of such obstacles as stood in the way of salvation being attainable by all sinners on condition of their faithful compliance with the terms of the Gospel*, there is, on the principles of either party, the same perfectly suitable and adequate provision made in the all-sufficient merits and sufferings of the Son of God. And thus does it appear, that the advocates of what is called a "universal atonement," combined with a limited purpose in the Divine mind as to its application, are really in no better position than those who differ from them, when they come to explain the unrestricted language in which the Scriptures speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Saviour of the world," "the

ransom for all," the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," and of His sacrifice as a wonderful manifestation of the fatherly love and grace of God to all mankind.

Perhaps some may think that the best and easiest mode of putting an end to all controversy on this subject, would be for Calvinists to fall from their position that the atonement has any special destination. This, however, is a course which, as it seems to us, we dare not adopt. For, mark the consequences involved in such a concession. We must utterly disconnect the work of the Holy Spirit, in persuading and enabling men to receive the offered salvation and to persevere in faith and holiness, from the work of Jesus Christ by which the Holy Spirit, with all the plenitude of His gracious influences, has been purchased. We must cease also to regard the sacrifice of Christ as *effectually securing* the salvation of any sinners. We must be content to think of it as merely providing a *possibility* of salvation: And we must look to the *faith* of its recipients as that which is to turn the *possibility* into an *actuality*,—to supplement the Saviour's work instead of merely resting on it, and really to do *that* for those who are eventually saved, which all that the Saviour did and suffered has not accomplished. In a word, we must be driven to the conclusion that the Saviour's atoning death, considered in itself, *has done nothing more, and was not intended to do anything more, for those who are saved than for those who perish*. These are consequences which appear to us necessarily to follow from a denial of the special destination of our Lord's sacrifice, or from holding that it was alike destined for all sinners. And therefore it is that we shrink from such a position, because, while professing or seeming to widen the *extent* of the atonement, it compromises what is of incomparably greater importance,—the *reality*, *saving power*, and *efficacy* of the atonement.

At the same time, we have no hesitation in admitting that the atonement, while, in respect of actual efficacy, it is designed for those only who shall be eventually saved (which is really very like an identical proposition), does yet, in respect of its perfection and sufficiency, as well as in respect of the free offers of salvation that are founded on it, present a gracious aspect towards all sinners of the human race. Nay rather, we maintain that *it does as much for ALL as, on the principles of those who differ from us, it does for ANY*, being suitable and sufficient for all, and without restriction offered to all,—inasmuch that no other, or greater, or more freely offered



atonement would be requisite for the salvation of all sinners, if all would but avail themselves of it.

In fine, whatever be the destination of the atonement *when viewed from the stand-point of* THE OMNISCIENT GOD, to whom alone all His works are known from the beginning, it seems to me evident that *when viewed from* MAN'S *stand-point* (the only point of view from which *we* can regard it), it needs must be looked at and dealt with *as if intended for all*. No man living has any reason or any warrant to exclude himself or any of his brethren from its reference. God's *decretive will* is one of those "secret things which belong unto Himself," and which it is not for us to pry into. But God's *revealed will* "belongs to us and to our children for ever," that we may faithfully hear it and cheerfully comply with it. And what *is* His revealed will as bearing on the matter in question? We have it clearly announced in the following scriptural testimonies: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "God, our Saviour, will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."\*

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NOTE L, *page* 147.

THE PURPOSES OF GOD.

Although it would certainly be alike fruitless and presumptuous to attempt a solution of those unsearchable mysteries with which, to the limited faculties of man, the doctrine of the divine purposes must ever remain encompassed, there is no impropriety in seeking to disentangle it from some of those *extraneous* difficulties in which it has been involved through misrepresentations or misconceptions of its true import.

1. One error in reference to this subject, which I have already noticed, is an oversight of the connection or correspondence between the *purposes of God* and His *actual procedure*. The purposes of

\* John xx. 31; 1 John iii. 23; John vi. 37; 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

God are but His actions in prior intention ; and His actions are but His purposes in actual accomplishment. "Whatsoever comes to pass," nothing more, nothing less, nothing else, is, in every case, the thing which God has predetermined.

If this consideration were duly kept in view, it would silence many an objection to the doctrine of predestination. For if the purposes of God have respect to things *just as they are*, it is clear that no exception can be taken to the wisdom, goodness, or rectitude of these purposes, further than a like exception may be taken to *that actual course of the divine administration* by which they are eventually carried into effect. No one will be so unreasonable as to allege that a line of conduct, which is in itself right, becomes wrong so soon as it is found to have been adopted, not rashly or casually, but in fulfilment of a deliberate intention. The forethought or determinate purpose with which any action is done, may make that action *more commendable*, if it be in itself right, or *more reprehensible*, if it be in itself wrong ; but cannot, with any show of reason, be supposed *to transform altogether the moral quality of the action*, so as to make what is in itself good subject to blame, or what is in itself bad worthy of commendation. Now, inasmuch as it is fully believed by all Christians that God's actual procedure—though to our minds it be often mysterious—is wise and just and good and holy, they needs must ascribe the same characteristics to His eternal purposes, by which that actual procedure, and nothing else, was predetermined. They cannot consistently regard it as objectionable that God should have previously resolved to do those self-same things in which, when He actually does them, they believe that there is nothing objectionable.

The same consideration furnishes a ready reply to the shallow objection, so frequently alleged against the doctrine of predestination—namely, that *it supersedes the use of means and personal efforts* for the attainment of those things which God has predetermined. For if the divine purposes have respect to "whatsoever comes to pass," and are "executed in the works of creation and of providence," then must these purposes be viewed as having reference,—not to unconnected or isolated occurrences, standing in no manner of relation to one another,—but to the whole concatenation of events which constitute the course of divine providence,—to things *as they actually emerge, in the order in which they occur*, and with *the mutual connections and dependencies* which subsist among them. The same divine purpose which determines any

event, determines that event as produced by its causes, promoted by its means, depending on its conditions, and followed by its results. Things do not *come to pass* in a state of *isolation*; neither were they predetermined so to come to pass. In other words, God's purpose embraces the means along with the end,—the cause along with the effect,—the condition along with the result or issue suspended on it,—the order, relations, and dependencies of all events, as no less essential to the divine plan than the events themselves. With reference to the salvation of the elect, for example, the purpose of God is, not only that they shall be saved, but that they shall believe, repent, and persevere in faith and holiness in order to salvation. The case, therefore, that is often put by objectors, is an impossible one. When they say, "If we are elected, we shall certainly be saved, do what we will; and if we are not elected, we shall certainly not be saved, do what we may"—they are making a supposition which the nature of the case does not admit of. No man can be of the number of the elect if he utterly neglects the appointed means of salvation. And no man can be of the number of the non-elect, if he truly repents, and unfeignedly believes the Gospel, and does whatever else the Word of God requires of him as necessary to the ultimate enjoyment of eternal life. The salvation of a sinner *is actually brought to pass*, according to the plainest declarations of Holy Scripture, *in the way of faith and repentance, and no otherwise*; and hence, it must needs be *in this way, and no otherwise*, that the salvation of a sinner has in any case been *predetermined*. For the purposes of God have always reference to nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else, than that which, in its appointed time, is actually accomplished.

2. Another error in reference to the divine purposes has arisen from attaching to some of the expressions applied to them a farther meaning than, when so applied, they can properly be held to bear. I allude to the words "*ordain*" and "*decree*." These words, as used among men, ordinarily convey the ideas of "public proclamation," "authoritative command," "peremptory injunction," all of which are as far as possible from being characteristic of the purposes of God. For these, unlike what we commonly call "decrees," are known only to Him in whose counsels they have originated. In some exceptional cases, indeed, He has been pleased to give a prophetic intimation of them to His creatures. But with these rare exceptions they are veiled in impenetrable darkness. There is no



announcement made of them, no authority wielded by them, no manner of force or efficient influence exerted by them.

I am satisfied that a great deal of the prejudice with which the doctrine of predestination is regarded, arises from overlooking the consideration I have just mentioned. Men are exceedingly apt, when speaking or hearing of "the decrees of God," to attach to them the idea of *express commands* or *peremptory enactments*, by which the will of some uncontrollable sovereign is authoritatively declared and rigidly enforced, or otherwise to ascribe to them some direct and potent influence in bringing to pass the events to which they relate. This, however, is altogether a misconception. The decrees of God are merely His *purposes*. He alone, except when they are prophetically announced, is cognisant of them: and He alone, if we may so speak, is influenced by them. At least, they have no direct influence on any besides Him. They are God's secret designs for the regulation of His own procedure. *But they are not rules or laws prescribed for the guidance of others; still less are they powers or agencies exerted for the coercion of others.* Considered in themselves, they are confined to God alone; and they must first have had effect given to them in His actual doings—in other words, they must have ceased to be mere purposes, by being carried out and embodied in action—before any other being in the universe can be influenced by them. It is a gross error, therefore, to speak of the purposes of God *as exercising a compulsory influence on His creatures*. For, in fact, it is not by His purposes at all, but only by His actual procedure, that any influence, whether compulsory or otherwise, can be exerted upon us.

3. A farther error, in reference to this subject, has arisen from ignoring or overlooking the fact, that the purposes of God are, to a great extent, *only permissive*.

That they are so, is evidently the doctrine of our Confession of Faith. For while we are there told that "God from all eternity did unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass,"\* it is added immediately after, as a qualification of this statement, "*yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*" These words plainly imply that the purposes of God are only permissive, in so far as they have respect to those events which are to be brought about *by the will of free agents*, and more particularly in so far as they have

\* Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sec. 1.

respect to *the commission of sins*, of which it would be gross impiety to suppose that God is in any sense the originator.

We are led to the same conclusion by what is said, in other parts of our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, regarding the execution of the divine purposes. Thus we are told that "God by His providence ordereth all things to fall out *according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently*;"\* and that the providence of God extends even to the sins of His creatures "by such a *permission* as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." And more particularly, as regards the sin of our first parents, we are told that they were "left to the freedom of their own will"† when they committed it; and that "this their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, *to permit*."‡

We are all ready to admit that, in the actual government of the universe, there are some things which God is only to be considered as *allowing*, while as regards other things *He is directly concerned in the doing of them*. And this distinction is fully recognised in Scripture, as when it is written of God, that "in times past He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways,"§ that "He endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,"|| that "He gave up the Israelites to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels."¶ What, then, does the doctrine of predestination amount to, when viewed in relation to these two departments of the divine procedure? The amount of it is simply this: that whatever God *does* in the course of His providence, He always *intended to do*; and whatever in the course of His providence He *permits to be done by other free agents*, He always *intended to permit*. And when thus stated, it is impossible to charge the doctrine, either with subverting the liberty of the human will, or with making God the author of sin.

4. In connection with the remark I have just made, it may be further observed, that the doctrine of predestination has been exposed to much unmerited odium by being associated, and I may

\* Confession of Faith, chap. v. sec. 2, 4.

‡ Confession of Faith, chap. v. sec. 1.

|| Rom. ix. 22.

† Shorter Catechism, ques. 13.

§ Acts xiv. 16.

¶ Psalm lxxxi. 12.

even say identified, with the philosophical doctrine of the *necessity* of human actions.

It cannot be denied that, since the days of President Edwards, these two doctrines have by the vast majority of modern Calvinists been held to be inseparable. It is equally certain, however, that Calvin himself did not by any means concur in this opinion ; and that the Westminster Assembly, in so far as their sentiments can be ascertained from the terms of our Confession of Faith, appear rather to have leant to the side of liberty than to that of necessity. Of this Sir William Hamilton\* was so fully persuaded, that he did not hesitate to bring a charge of gross heresy against the great mass of modern Scottish theologians, for advocating the doctrine of philosophical necessity in downright opposition to the standards of the Church of Scotland. And Principal Cunningham,† while endeavouring with much ability to vindicate Dr Chalmers, Principal Hill, and other Necessitarians from the charge of heresy, is nevertheless obliged to admit that “there is nothing in the Calvinistic theology which makes it indispensable for its supporters, in point of logical consistency, to adopt the doctrine of philosophical necessity ;” and he strongly deprecates the course followed by Edwards, Hill, Chalmers, and others, in holding the two doctrines to be inseparable, “as elevating the doctrine of necessity to a place and influence to which it has not, and cannot have, a rightful claim ; and as laying upon the scriptural doctrine of predestination a burden of servitude to which it cannot be legitimately subjected.” “The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination,” he continues, “has a sufficiently strong foundation in direct evidence, both from reason and Scripture, to maintain itself in opposition to all inferential objections to it (and there are really no others), and to bear up along with it every position, theological or philosophical, that can be really *proved* to be involved in or deducible from it. But still, as it is a doctrine which usually calls forth strong prejudices, and is assailed by plausible objections, we should beware of attempting to burden it with any weight which it is not bound to carry ; or representing it as obliged to stand or fall with a doctrine, like that of philosophical necessity, so much inferior to it, at once in intrinsic importance and in the kind and degree of evidence on which it rests.”

5. I cannot refrain from supplementing these remarks with the

\* Hamilton's ‘Discussions,’ p. 628.

† Cunningham's ‘Theology of the Reformation,’ p. 511, 517.



following admirable statements of Dr South, who, with all his opposition to Puritanism, was yet, as to the question before us, a decided Calvinist.

Speaking of the Divine purposes, he says that, "Be they never so absolute, yet they have *no causal influence* upon sinful actions; no, nor indeed upon any actions else, forasmuch as the bare decree or purpose of a thing produces or puts nothing in being at all. It is, as the schools call it, an *immanent act*—that is, such a one as rests wholly within God, and effects nothing without Him. Besides, whenever God decrees or purposes that a thing shall come to pass, He decrees or purposes the manner of its production also, and that suitably to the way of working proper to that cause by which it is effected; for example, if He decrees or purposes that a man shall do such or such a thing, He decrees or purposes that the man shall do it freely, or agreeably to that liberty of will which his nature invests him with.

"But does not everything decreed by God certainly and necessarily come to pass? And then, how can we prevent it? Is there not a force put upon us from Heaven to do the thing that is thus decreed?

"I answer, no. For there is a great difference between a mere *illative necessity*, which consists only in the logical consequence of one thing upon another, and a *causal necessity*, which efficiently determines and puts the faculty upon working. The divine decree or purpose exerts no force or impulse upon man's will, but leaves it to its own natural liberty. It is certain, indeed, that by the former kind of merely *illative necessity* the thing decreed will assuredly have its event. But this is no greater necessity than God's *foreknowledge* puts upon the event of the thing foreknown. And I suppose none will say that God's foreknowledge of a man's actions does, by any active influence, necessitate that man to do those actions; albeit, that this consequence stands unshakable, that whatever God foreknows a man will do, shall certainly be done by that man. Otherwise, where is God's omniscience or infallibility? . . . . Let any one compare God's decree and His foreknowledge, and he will find that, as to the event, the same necessity passes both upon the thing decreed and the thing foreknown. And, therefore, if men will confess that God's foreknowledge does not force or push a man upon the doing of anything, it will follow also that neither does His decree. But if, in scanning either, there occurs any difficulty, to our apprehensions not resolvable, it is be-

cause God is infinite, and because an infinite mind, both in its knowledge and purposes, proceeds not according to the methods and measures of a finite understanding. And upon this account all the arguments, which with so much noise and confidence are urged against God's decrees, will be found to be but popular and fallacious, and grounded upon the application of men's ways of acting and apprehending to God; and consequently they tend to disprove God's infinity as much, or more, than anything else. . . . None are so apt to babble about predestination as the illiterate vulgar, and from hence to take reasons for what they are to do. But what can warrant them to insist upon mysteries when they are called to duties? Why pore and break their brains upon the hidden senses of a decree, when they have the plain and intelligible voice of a precept? God hath shown thee, O man, what is good and what is evil. He has placed life and death before thee. This is the rule by which thou must stand or fall. *And no man will find that his fulfilling God's secret purpose will bear him out in his breach of God's revealed will.*"\*

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NOTE M, *page* 157.

UNION OF BELIEVERS WITH CHRIST.

It is proper to add, that believers are represented in Scripture not only as "*receiving* Christ" by faith, but as being intimately and vitally *united to Him*. Their union to Him is likened to that which subsists between husband and wife, between the vine-branches and the stock, or between the members of the body and the head. And in virtue of it, we are taught that "He is in them, and they in Him;" that "their life is hid with Christ in God;" that they are "crucified with Christ, and live no more themselves, but Christ liveth in them;" that they are "quickened together with Christ," and "risen with Him;" that "Christ dwells in their hearts by faith;" that "Christ is in them, the hope of glory;" that "abiding in Him they bring forth much fruit;" and that they "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ,

\* South's Sermon on James i. 14.

from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

This subject of the union of believers with Christ ought certainly to have a greater prominence assigned to it than it has usually received in the teaching of the Christian Church. For the due consideration of it is fitted to throw light on many things connected with the method of redemption, which might otherwise seem to be obscure and unaccountable; and in particular to dispel much of the prejudice with which such doctrines as "the imputation of the sins of believers to Jesus Christ," and "the imputation of His righteousness to believers," are apt, when their union with Him is lost sight of, to be regarded.

The chief thing, however, which for the present I am concerned to remark is, that this union, as regards the subjects of it, is an *individual or personal matter*. The one party to it is the Lord Jesus Christ, a distinct personal being. And who are the other parties? Not manhood in the abstract, nor all men indiscriminately or in the mass, but certain individual men whom the Scriptures plainly distinguish as united to Christ, from others who have no connection with Him. It seems evident, then, that for the constitution of such a union the Saviour's mere assumption of our common nature is not sufficient. Something more is needed, on the part of those who are united to Him, to give them, individually and personally, a connection with Him which does not pertain to others. And this something is just that appropriating *faith* which is wrought in each one of them by the grace of God, and by which they become, as it were, engrafted into Christ, so as to be not only partakers of His benefits, but animated by His Spirit, conformed to His likeness, and closely identified with Him in all His interests and purposes.

There are some who would resolve the mediatorial work of Christ into what they call an "*identification of Himself with sinners*," rather than a substitution of Himself in the room of sinners. But instead of saying that "Christ identified Himself with sinners," it would assuredly be nearer the truth to say that *sinners must identify themselves with Christ* in order to obtain the benefits of His mediation. And this identification of sinners with the Saviour is to each of them, as we have already observed, a matter of personal concern. It cannot, therefore, be held to be accomplished by the Saviour's mere assumption of the common nature of the human race. It re-



quires a personal appropriation of Him for their own behoof in the exercise of faith, whereby they receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to them in the Gospel.

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NOTE N, *page 211.*

HEB. xii. 23.

According to Dr Candlish, "*the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven*" signifies "the entire body of *New Testament believers*"—the "many brethren with whom the Son shares His birthright or right of primogeniture;" while "*the spirits of just men made perfect*" are "those just men of *the Old Testament*, in whose spiritual state, while they lived and when they died, there was a certain incompleteness or defect," which is now remedied by their being at length admitted to share in the same privileges of sonship with Christian believers.

It does not appear to me that the construction thus put upon either of these expressions is a sound one.

1. As to "*the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven*," I agree with Owen, Delitzsch, Alford, and other distinguished critics, in thinking that it denotes the *Church below*, as distinguished from *the Church above*. Those persons of whom our Lord says (Luke x. 20), "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven," were persons *yet living on earth*. And we may reasonably conclude that such also was the condition of those members of "*the Church of the first-born*" who are similarly described. Why should they be spoken of as merely "*written in heaven*" if they were already in actual possession of heaven? Surely this expression better accords with the supposition that they have not yet entered on the full privileges of their heavenly citizenship, although they have their names inscribed in the heavenly roll. Besides, as Alford observes, the word *ἐκκλησία*, when applied to men and not to angels, designates everywhere the assembly of the saints on earth. And the immediate sequence of the clause, "and to God the Judge of all," seems best explained by supposing that "*the Church*" referred to is *the Church militant here below*, which looks to the righteous

judgment of God for deliverance from her slanderers and persecutors.

But if it be the saints in heaven that are here spoken of, we have no ground for thinking that the designation given to them, as "the Church of *the first-born*," is such as to exclude the Old Testament saints. For *to them* pertained "the adoption" as well as to us (Rom. ix. 4). And Paul, in Gal. iv. 1, 2, unquestionably recognises them as having been sons and heirs of God, although, being "under tutors and governors," they did not enjoy on earth the full privileges of their sonship.

2. Regarding the other phrase, "*the spirits of just men made perfect*," some critics (as Bleek, De Wette, and Ebrard) hold that it specially refers to the Old Testament saints. Others, as Grotius, Bengel, Sykes, Baumgarten, and Storr, maintain the directly opposite opinion, that it refers exclusively to believers under the New Testament. While by a third and much more numerous class, including Knapp, Tholuck, Bisping, Delitzsch, Owen, Stuart, and Alford, it is held to have a general reference to all departed saints, who, though still awaiting the resurrection of their bodies, are already, as regards their *spirits*, "made perfect," having finished their earthly trials and entered into their heavenly rest.

The last of these views, I think, is that which would naturally occur to any intelligent reader of the passage who is not bent on the establishment of some particular theory. For there seems to be no reason for restricting the phrase in question to one special class of departed saints more than another. And if by "the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven" we understand *the whole company of the faithful here below*, I do not see how we can otherwise interpret "the spirits of just men made perfect" than as signifying, with equal generality, *the whole company of the saints above*.

But, be this as it may, there is nothing in this passage to indicate that the *perfecting* of "the spirits of the just," who are here referred to, consisted in the *removal of any defects adhering to them even in their heavenly condition*. Rather must we suppose it to have consisted in the *removal of all the imperfections of their earthly state*, and as having taken place when they entered the celestial mansions. They were imperfect while they dwelt on earth, but were "made perfect" when received into heaven.

But this is not all. For even if we suppose their state in the world above to have been ameliorated after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no reason why this amelioration should

be held to refer exclusively, or even specially, to their *adoption*. For all their other privileges, as well as this, must be traced to the finished work of the Saviour. "If sons before," says Dr Candlish, "they were so prospectively, and as it were potentially, *in posse* rather than *in esse*: they are sons now really and truly, in a sense and to an effect impossible before." \* But with equal truth may it be said, that *they were redeemed prospectively, and justified prospectively*. Whatever spiritual and heavenly blessings they enjoyed were all alike conferred on them in anticipation of the Saviour's work. And it was only when that work had been consummated that the ground of these blessings was fully explained and manifested.

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NOTE O, *page 235.*

THE SONSHIP OF BELIEVERS AS CONTRASTED WITH  
THAT OF CHRIST.

In confirmation of our views with reference to this subject, we have much satisfaction in quoting the following statements by Bishop Pearson, the learned expositor of the Apostles' Creed, and by Dr Thomas Goodwin, one of the most distinguished of the Puritan divines, and a member of the Westminster Assembly.

"As we find one person," says Pearson, "in a more peculiar manner the Son of God, so must we look upon God as in a more peculiar manner the Father of that Son. 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father,' saith our Saviour; the same of both, but in a different manner, denoted (in the original) by the article prefixed before the one, and not the other. It is true, indeed, that 'both He that sanctifieth,' that is, Christ, 'and they who are sanctified,' that is, faithful Christians, 'are all of one,' the same Father, the same God; 'for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren.' Yet are they not all of Him after the same manner; but *Christ* the beloved, the first-born, the only-begotten, is the Son after a more peculiar and more excellent manner; the rest with relation unto and dependence on His sonship. Among all the sons of God there is none like to that one Son of God. And if there be so great a dis-

\* Candlish on the 'Fatherhood of God,' p. 143.



parity in the filiation, we must make as great a difference in the corresponding relation. There is one degree of sonship founded on creation, and that is the lowest, as belonging unto all, both good and bad. Another degree above that is grounded on regeneration and adoption, belonging only to the truly faithful in this life. And a third, above the rest, founded on the resurrection or collation of the eternal inheritance and the similitude of God, appertaining to the saints alone in the world to come. But there is yet another degree of filiation, of a greater eminency and of a different nature, appertaining properly to none of these, but to *the true Son of God alone*, who amongst all His brethren hath alone received the title of '*His own Son*,' and a singular testimony from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son,' even in the presence of John the Baptist, yea, even in the midst of *Moses and Elias* (who are certainly the sons of God by all the other three degrees of filiation), and therefore hath called God after a peculiar way '*His own Father*' (πατήρα ἰδίον, John v. 18). And so at last we come to the most singular and eminent paternal relation, 'unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'God,' as Augustin says, 'is the Father of Him and of us, but *not the Father of us* AS of Him. Christ hath taught us to say, *our Father*, a form of speech which He never used Himself. Sometimes He calls Him *the Father*, sometimes *your*, but never *our*. He makes no such conjunction of us to Himself, as to make no distinction between us and Himself; so conjoining us as to distinguish, though so distinguishing as not to separate us.'” \*

The following are the words of Goodwin: and I attach the more importance to them, that Dr Candlish in his preface has, on very insufficient grounds, appealed to this distinguished Puritan writer “as virtually on his side in this argument:”—

“Whenever Christ spake of the Father before His disciples or others, He never said ‘Our Father;’ which yet He taught us to say, even when we pray in private, to the end that we should come to God as such a Father to us, as He is also to all others of His elect. And so the Jews were instructed to say, ‘We have one Father, even God’ (John viii. 41). But His own usual style was ‘My Father,’ and therefore so a Father to Him as to no other, nor to all or any of the sons of God. . . . When He had occasion to speak to and of His disciples (who were the chiefest saints then alive of the sons of men, and representing the rest for ever to come), how God was Father both to Him and them, yet He carefully makes this

\* Pearson on the Creed, Article i.

separation, 'My Father, and your Father' (John xx. 17). You see, He mentions their relation apart, yea, as separate and aloof from His own. He putteth the sonship or relation of all them into one common relation, 'Your Father,' and sets against it, and severs from it, as at a distance, His own, 'My Father.' And that to show that their relation of sons to God is not of the same rank or descent that His is.

"Moreover, in Rom. viii. 32, we read, that 'God spared not *His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all.' These '*us all*' had been before termed 'sons and heirs of God' in verse 17; and again, in verse 29, they had been called the 'brethren of Christ,' and He 'the First-born among many brethren.'

"Yet, after all this, by way of difference from these, the apostle entitles Christ '*God's own Son*.' To have said *His Son* by way of singularity, when mention is made of many other brethren, had been enough to signify His eminency—especially to say 'the First-born,' as in verse 29. But he adds hereto, over and above all, '*His own Son*;' as thereby signifying the different kind of sonship and fatherhood that was betwixt God and Him. This is therefore an eminent distinction of two sorts of sons which God hath; His own Son—His proper, genuine, true Son,—and others that were not His own, but by marriage or adoption; as strangers and aliens, in their original descent, use to be to a father that afterwards takes them for his adopted sons; and it is evident that this is his meaning. . . . God in this speaks as plainly to men in their own language as is possible to express it. Come to a man that hath both sons by marriage, and also a son out of his own loins, and you hear him call them all 'sons.' But particularly ask him, What son is this? 'My own son,' says he. And are these so? 'No; they are my daughters' husbands, and so my sons-in-law, or my wife's sons, or those whom I have taken to be my sons by will.' Well, and what doth a man mean when he says, 'This is my own son,'—especially when with a distinction from others that are adopted? All men understand by it 'a son that is of his substance, naturally begotten of him, of his flesh and blood.' Then, in its infinite proportion, it ought so to be understood here." \*

\* Goodwin's Works (Nichol's edition), vol. iv. p. 426, 427.

NOTE P, *page 252.*

## FAITH AS THE MEANS OF ADOPTION.

In holding faith to be the means of adoption *simply as receiving Christ*, who “gives us power to become the sons of God,” we are not to be regarded as excluding from this exercise of faith any reference to the special blessing of sonship thus conferred upon us.

Mr Campbell affirms that “when the adoption of us as sons is considered as superadded to justification by faith, the confidence with which we may think of ourselves as sons of God, and draw near to Him expecting to be acknowledged as such, *is no direct trust in a father’s heart at all, no trust in any feeling in God, of which we are personally the objects as His offspring*, but is in reality a trust in the *judicial grounds on which the title and place of sons is granted to us.*” \* And his reason for so affirming is, that “there is no element of sonship present in the faith that justifies us, nor any exercise of fatherliness contemplated as an element in the divine acceptance of us.”

There would be force in this statement of Mr Campbell did we hold with Turretine that adoption is but another name for the positive element in justification. But it is at once deprived of all force when we consider that these two blessings are in their nature perfectly distinct, although, as conferred on believers, they are inseparably united. Faith must necessarily vary in its exercises according to the diversity of its objects. “By faith,” as is well stated in the Westminster Confession, “a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word ; and *acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth* ; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come.” † It may readily be admitted that faith, as the means of *justification*, has respect only to “the judicial grounds” on which justification is granted to us. But faith, as the means of “*purifying the heart*,” must have reference to those precepts and motives and divine influences which are conducive to our purification. And in like manner, faith, as the means of *adoption*, must be held to “contemplate an exercise of

\* Campbell on the Atonement, p. 345.

† Confession of Faith, chap. xiv. sec. 2.



fatherliness" on the part of God, and to include a corresponding exercise of filial trust on the part of the believer.

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NOTE Q, *page 261.*

SEALING IMPORT OF BAPTISM IN THE CASE OF  
INFANTS.

The question may be put, How far are the views we have stated respecting the sealing import of baptism applicable to the case of infants?

It must, of course, be owned that infants are incapable of deriving encouragement and comfort from their baptism, as a seal of the divine promises, at the time of its administration. But this is no reason why it may not in after years, when they come to reflect on it, be eminently conducive, by the blessing of God and the working of His Holy Spirit, to the confirmation of their faith and hope.

Even in the case of *adults*, as we have seen, baptism conveys no assurance of spiritual blessings, except on the terms of that covenant which is sealed by it. In other words, it only conveys to them such an assurance, subject to the condition *either that they now are, or that they eventually become, believers in the Gospel.* Now, if this be all the assurance which it gives in the case of adults, there is no reason why it should be considered as giving *less* assurance than this in the case of infants. It certainly may be viewed as furnishing to both alike a visible pledge, superadded to God's verbal promise, that His mercies are for ever sure to all who will put their trust in Him. And this pledge has not only a present, but a prospective reference; so that its recipients, as soon as they are brought (if ever they be brought) to the exercise of faith, are warranted, not only to reflect upon the seal of the divine promises thus imparted to them for their own comfort, but to plead it and found upon it as a ground of confidence before God, on the strength of which they may the more urgently solicit and the more hopefully expect His promised mercies.

In illustration of this point, we may adduce a case which is, doubtless, occasionally found to occur among Anabaptists—namely, the case of an adult who receives baptism on making a Christian profession, which is afterwards found and acknowledged to have

been insincere. When such a one, probably long after his baptism, is brought with all simplicity and godly sincerity to embrace the Gospel, it is not considered necessary to re-baptise him. And why? Because, doubtless, the sealing import of the ordinance, when administered to such a person, had reference to the promise of God as for ever sure to all believers, and consequently as sure *to him*, if either at that time, or at any after period of his life, he should become a believer. There is no need that a new seal of the promise should be given to him, any more than that a new revelation of the promise should be made to him. The seal which he formerly received continues to be in force, as truly and fully as the promise which was sealed by it. The one, as well as the other, only requires *faith* on the part of him to whom it is communicated, in order that he may obtain the full benefit of it. And whensoever the baptised person exercises a true faith, he is warranted to rely on the baptismal seal of the divine promise, as well as on the promise that is sealed by it, as a ground of encouragement and confidence before God.

Now, it is not surely to be thought that, in this respect, a person who has received baptism in infancy, when as yet *incapable of exercising faith*, is in a worse position than one who has received baptism in mature manhood, *when destitute of a true faith*. Unquestionably the former, as well as the latter, is entitled, when at any after period he becomes a true believer, to look back on this sealing ordinance, which has been once for all administered to him as a pledge of the certainty and faithfulness of the covenant of God. The promises were sealed to him at the time when he received baptism, subject to the condition that he either then was, or should eventually prove to be, one of the true heirs of promise. And so soon, accordingly, as he proves himself to be so, by exercising a sincere faith in the Gospel of Christ, he is warranted not only to claim the promises as pertaining to him; but also to found upon the pledge of them which his baptism affords, as a reason for all the more confidently relying on them. This is precisely the doctrine laid down in our Confession of Faith, where it is thus stated, that "The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; but that by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will in His appointed time."

NOTE R, *page* 283.THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND PROGRESSIVE  
THEOLOGY.

“I never have had any scruple to affirm,” says Dr Candlish, “that the statements of our Confession and Catechisms on the subject of adoption are by no means satisfactory. No doubt, all that they say is true, but it amounts to very little. The answer in the Shorter Catechism is really in substance scarcely anything more than that adoption is adoption. In the other documents, the matter is handled more fully, and some of the privileges of the children of God are enumerated. Still, even in them, the whole matter is left in the last degree vague and indefinite; and no information whatever is given, nor is any opinion expressed, as to how the relation of sonship is constituted, or as to what its precise nature is.

“The contrast is very remarkable in this respect between their treatment of the subject of adoption and their treatment of all the other topics connected with the purchase and application of redemption; plainly showing, as I cannot but conclude, that while they had fully matured their views and made up their minds upon these last, and were in fact quite at home in them, they were very much at sea as to the former.

“I hold them, therefore, to have virtually left the whole of that department of theology which bears on God’s paternal relation to His people, and their filial relation to Him, an entirely open question—a perfect *tabula rasa*,—so far as any verdict or deliverance of theirs is concerned. I consider that we have the fullest liberty to sink new shafts in this mine which they evidently had not explored,—if only we take care that our diggings shall do no damage to any of the far more important mines which they did explore, and explored so thoroughly and so well.”\*

I am not by any means prepared to acquiesce in these strictures on our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. I cannot admit the justice of the allegation that “they leave the whole of that department of theology which bears on God’s paternal relation to His people, and their filial relation to Him, an entirely open question;” that “they give no information whatever as to how the relation of

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 285-287.



sonship is constituted, or what its precise nature is ;” and that “the whole matter is left by them in the last degree vague and indefinite,” so as to necessitate the conclusion that “they were very much at sea in regard to it.” On the contrary, they seem to me to teach many things that are highly interesting and important concerning this Christian privilege—probably as much as is “either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence deducible therefrom.” They trace it to its source in the sovereign grace of God. They connect it with the person and work of Jesus Christ. They also represent it as inseparably connected with justification, as well as with effectual calling or regeneration. And they enter, somewhat fully and minutely, into the details of what it implies or carries with it. And though their statements are not perhaps so precise and particular in regard to some of the matters connected with it as they would have been if any serious controversies had been agitated upon the subject, yet I am satisfied that they express or imply everything that is either very clearly revealed in the Word of God or very necessary for our comfort and edification. And as for the attempt made to supplement their deficiencies by “sinking new shafts in this unexplored mine,” I cannot help thinking that the “new shafts” which have been sunk are calculated to do a considerable amount of “damage ;”—and, at all events, I may venture to express a doubt whether the success or the substantial produce of these “diggings” be such as to hold out any very great encouragement to future explorers.

We hear much indeed of the necessity, in this inquiring age, of aiming at new discoveries and fresh attainments in theology, as well as in other departments of human knowledge. And we are often told, that if Christian theology have any just claims to the character of a *science*, it must, like all other sciences, be *progressive*, instead of standing still or lagging behind the march of intellect. It is to be feared, indeed, that what is deemed *progress* in this field of inquiry has not unfrequently been of the nature of retrogression, rather than of advancement. To no inconsiderable extent it has consisted in the rejection of old truths, the revival of exploded errors, the obscuring of what has seemed hitherto to be well defined, and the unsettling of what has been long held to be well established. And the tendency of it has in many cases been to diminish, instead of increasing, those stores of heavenly doctrine, which have in times past so richly contributed to the peace and joy and consolation of the faithful.

At the same time, we are very far from holding that there is no room for progress in theology. To say so would show that we had formed a most inadequate estimate of the depth and fulness of the oracles of God. Widely as the province of revealed truth has been already traversed, we cannot affirm that it is as yet thoroughly explored. Much more remains to be done than has been hitherto accomplished in the way of expounding and illustrating the Holy Scriptures, removing their difficulties, elucidating their connections, explaining their allusions, unfolding their peculiar excellencies, and reconciling their apparent contradictions. And though, with respect to those cardinal and fundamental articles of divine truth which lie on the very surface of the sacred volume, and form to all believers, learned or unlearned, the indispensable groundwork of their faith and hope, it would be unreasonable to cherish the expectation of any very novel or striking theological discoveries, yet *even here* we dare not venture to say that any such thing as progress is impracticable. The nature of these truths may be more clearly illustrated. Their mutual relations may be more exactly pointed out. Their certainty may be more thoroughly established against the assaults of unbelief and error. Their symmetry and harmony, as prominent parts of a great system, may be exhibited in a manner more striking and more complete. Their comparative importance may be more justly estimated. And new applications may from time to time be made of them, for instruction, or reproof, or comfort, or encouragement, in the varying circumstances of believers in every successive age.

While fully admitting, however, that theology is a progressive science, *we must not ignore or disparage the progress it has already made.* In denying that it is *altogether stationary*, we must not suppose that it is *altogether variable*, with no elements of fixedness or certainty pertaining to it. This would be a grave error. Much has been already done in the science of theology, however much may yet remain to be accomplished. And what has been already done has, to a great extent, been *well done*—done effectively and surely—so that there is no need and no likelihood of its being *undone*. More particularly may this be said to be the case with the great leading facts and principles of Christianity. Those “weighty matters” which, if verily believed at all, may be seen at a glance to be matters of essential importance,—as, for example, the divinity of the Three Persons of the Godhead; the natural corruption and ungodliness of the human heart; the incarnation, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God; the sacrifice of Christ

for the redemption of sinners ; the renewing and sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit ; the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment,—these fundamental truths, which are written as with a sunbeam on the sacred pages, and are generally received by all Christians who acknowledge the supreme and exclusive authority of the Scriptures, together with all the great principles of moral duty which are necessary for the practical regulation of the Christian life, are just as fully ascertained now as they are ever likely to be ; inasmuch as they are gathered, not exclusively from the more obscure, but from the plainer and more intelligible portions of the Word of God. This, indeed, is nothing else than might have reasonably been expected. For we can hardly suppose that God would have given to the world, after a long course of preparatory dispensations, a full and final revelation in the Gospel of Christ—designed for the spiritual edification, practical guidance, and everlasting salvation of all such as should faithfully receive it,—and yet that He should have left even the most essential of those truths, with which it was thus His intention to make us acquainted, involved in so much obscurity and uncertainty, that even now, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, additional researches should be necessary for their evolution.

And surely it is no real disparagement of the progressive character of the science of theology, to say that already its great leading principles have been definitely and satisfactorily ascertained. It would, I think, be a much worse disparagement of it to say otherwise. In judging of the progressiveness of any department of human knowledge, we must look *to the past* as well as *to the future* ; we must look at the actual attainments already made in it, as well as at the possible attainments to be yet expected. And if so, it seems to me that no more injurious reflection could possibly be cast on theology as a progressive science than the assertion that little or no progress has yet been made in the way of fixing down even its fundamental principles, and that, though it has been prosecuted for eighteen hundred years by many of the master-minds of the several ages in which they lived, these fundamental principles still remain in a state of absolute mobility or uncertainty !

How is it in this respect with other departments of science—as, for example, with the science of astronomy ? All persons will readily admit that astronomy is a progressive science. But, in saying so, no reasonable man intends to ignore the progress already made by Kepler, Newton, Herschel, and Laplace, in ascertaining



the facts and laws of the planetary system ; or to hold that these facts and laws are so likely to be overturned by the ever-advancing march of thought that nothing like a fixed place ought to be given them in our astronomical creed—and that our ingenuous youths, when entering on the study of astronomy, have need to be seriously cautioned against yielding to them an inordinate measure of deference and respect. Just so with theology. In holding *it* to be a progressive science, we are far from ignoring the vast progress that has been already made, in the way of ascertaining and methodising those truths which are most plainly and prominently set forth in Holy Scripture ; or from thinking that even now, after so long a time, the whole Christian Church has still need of one to teach them “ which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”

I may quote, as to this subject, the words of that able writer whose views upon other topics I have so often found myself obliged to controvert in the course of the preceding Lectures. Speaking of creeds, or confessions of faith, he observes :—

“ One chief value of such documents is this—that they mark off, as ascertained and finally settled, doctrines upon which, after thorough investigation, the evangelical Church may be held to have made up her mind. On that very account they render the work of the farther search after truth both easier and safer than otherwise it might be. They define, by well-placed landmarks, the territory which has been fully won and accurately surveyed ; thereby at once facilitating on the one hand, and guiding and guarding on the other hand, the traveller, who, with due caution, would venture to explore what may be beyond.—Hence they have been themselves progressive. There has been an advance, step by step, according as, in the march of controversy and discussion, the Church has been led to clear up her views on successive points or topics of theology, and to embody them for preservation in articulate and exact propositions. It was in this way that, in primitive times, the Church matured and fixed, one after another, her decisions on the Trinity, on the Incarnation, on the union of the two natures in Christ, on the Personality of the Holy Spirit. Thus by stages the system grew. One article was adjusted satisfactorily ; and the adjustment of it opened and prepared the way for the handling of a new subject. That in its turn being rightly formularised, if I may so say, became the point of departure for a fresh start. And so things went on ; until what I may be allowed to call the Patristic scheme of Christianity, as handed down in the three Creeds and in the decrees of the orthodox

councils, was complete—so complete, as far as it goes, that in its substance it still stands as the Fathers left it, and has never since been touched. But it has received additions. The Augustinian doctrine of grace, and the Lutheran article of justification, were movements in advance—movements which had their consummation, as it were, in the exact science of Calvin, and the harmony of the Reformed Confessions. Such is the manner, and such the spirit in which the Church hitherto has acted on the principle of ‘proving all things, and holding fast that which is good.’ She consolidates her successive conquests as she proceeds. ‘Whereto she has already attained,’ she stands firm; yet not as if she had already attained all.” \*

To the same effect are the following remarks of Professor Milligan, in his recently published Lectures on the Decalogue:—

Speaking of “those creeds which embody the triumphs of past thought in the great world of theology,” he observes: “They neither limit our thoughts nor restrain our progress. If we have no reverence for them, if we did not start on our course with a full possession of them, we might be the easy prey of every novelty. But they exercise over us their calming power. They bind us to the past. They make us feel, not that we have to discover all truth—a thought which would prostrate instead of strengthening us—but that we have only to take our place in the great march of the Church of Christ, and to see whether, out of the Christian experience of our own time, we have not something to add to truth already known. They thus regulate our freedom, but do not fetter it. They regulate it as the past history of humanity regulates every wise promoter of its progress now.” †

\* Candlish on the ‘Fatherhood of God,’ p. 290, 291.

† Milligan on the ‘Decalogue,’ p. 189, 190.

THE END.

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